

Hungary For Success at Wolverhampton

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Hungarian players Norbert Tofalvi and Zsuzsanna Vegh won the top band 1 Men's and Women's events between them, stealing the show on day one of the Tees Sport Wolverhampton Grand Prix held at the Aldersley Leisure Centre on Saturday the 15th of May.

Tofalvi who plies his trade in the Regionaliga in south Germany playing for the club Esv Weil yet coaches with the Urban Progress club in Hertfordshire simply had too much ammunition in the closing stages against his gallant opponent David McBeath in the final. However it was McBeath who was looking the likelier winner going two sets to one up but the Hungarian master turned on the style taking the last two legs to pick up his winners cheque for £60. David, seeded at three made his way to the final by outplaying Gavin Maguire in the first round then an incredibly tight five set marathon over Sam Perry to enjoy a straight sets win over Gary Dodd to reach the final. The surprise in the top half of the draw was the early departure of top seed Niall Cameron in straight sets to Will Maybanks. However in the next round, the quarter final Will was outclassed by Tofalvi and the Hungarian powered his way to the final gaining a four set victory against Mark Simpson. Norbert's mental preparation was an enormous weapon where his instinctive movements, quick reflexes and shot selection however how much pressure he was under were oh so essential to his success.

Nineteen year old former Hungarian junior number one Zsuzsanna Vegh took time out during her one week visit to England to play in the Grand Prix. Zsuzsanna was in a different league in winning the Women's band 1 event, such was her dominance she did not drop a set in the entire tournament. Her final opponent Chloe Whyte who had earlier enjoyed a great competition beating Yolanda King in the last four stage (who had previously beaten top seed Natalie Slater and after being two sets to love down!) was always playing second fiddle losing out in straight sets to the superb Hungarian. Second seeded Lauren Spink, after brushing aside Sarah Horsnell in the last eight stage was no match for the unseeded Hungarian Vegh who simply ran away with the event. She will be a force to be reckoned with in Sunday's Women's Open event.

The Men's Band 2 tournament went to Grantham Academy player Dan O'Connell who after losing in his group to Paul Worrallo bounced back to take the title at the expense of losing finalist Wayne Mason. Dan the man then got into top gear in the knockout stage beating Mike Brown, Ian Musk, Luca Mariano and semi finalist Dean Cundy. Mason had played very well to reach the last stage by terminating the challenges from James Ward, Andy Smith, Eddie Fambely and losing semi finalist Paul Worrallo, but his challenge petered out in the final with O'Connell.

England number 2 cadet Tressa Armitage comfortably beat all before her dropping just one set on her way to the title and that in the semi final to Charlotte Airey on her way to securing the Women's band 2 event. Her final challenger Xue Bai (who was the Women's band 2 and 3 winner at Blackpool and voted player of the tournament) was defeated in straight sets by the hard hitting Hampshire hurricane. Losing semi finalists Hannah Avery (nice to see you back at a Grand Prix event) and Charlotte Airey enjoyed a super tournament.

The top player in the Men's band 3 event was the number 4 seed Adam Nutland who took the title against Pawel Orzechowski. Adam took the full the 5 ends to defeat Bristol Academy's Dean Cundy in the quarter final. He followed that up with a 4 set victory over the number 7 seed Andrew Hodges. In the opposite half of the draw the unseeded Pawel Orzechowski returned to form after losing in the group to beat Grantham Academy's band 2 winner Dan O'Connell. In the quarter final Pawel gained another win removing Eddie Fambely in straight sets before dispatching of Aaron McKibbin in a match going the full distance to reach the final.

The Women's band 3 final was taken by Lucy Davidson in a stupendous see saw match of two halves. With Tressa Armitage taking an early 2-0 set lead and seemingly in control in the 3rd set, Lucy found that extra sparkle to turn the match around and come out a close 3-2 winner to deservedly take the title. Lucy unseeded in the tournament defeated the number 2 seed Ann Barnes in her group to go through as winner. The Derbyshire

pocket rocket then advanced to the semi finals courtesy of a victory over Emily Roys in the last 8, where she took 4 sets to defeat Charlotte Airey. In the top half of the draw Tressa, also unseeded made her way to final by grinding out a result in a marathon match over Charlotte Spencer coming through 14-12 in the 5th leg. She then eased past the already defeated 2nd seed Anne Barnes in the semi final, but could not close out another victory over Lucy in the final.

Diminutive 12 year old Sam Mabey from the Unity club in Northampton fought out a fast and furious youth versus mature final match against 35 year old number 1 seed Ernest Mpundu in the Men's band 4. Sam gave it his all but narrowly lost out to the more experienced Halton club British League player, who took his maiden Grand Prix win. Both players took their time to start in the morning progressing from their groups as runners up after losses in early games. Laurence Sweeney and Graham Cleary made their contributions to the event losing out in the semi finals to Sam and Ernest respectively.

Laurence Sweeney turned his fortunes around in the afternoon Men's band 5 event. After losing out in the semi final of band 4 he went one better to defeat Simon Oyler in the final 3 sets to 1. On route to the title he won 5 knockout matches including a victory over his earlier conqueror in the form of Sam Mabey in the quarter final. Simon Oyler did well to advance from an unseeded position to reach the final winning 7 matches to reach the last stage.

Norfolk based Aaron Marche who hails from Bernard Matthews country played some really bootiful matches in his first ever Grand Prix to take the band 6 title. He made a turkey out of his rivals, however he almost got a roasting himself in the 1st round being 2-1 and 9-3 down but turned it around in the heat of battle to get past Jamie Davies. Having snatched victory from the jaws of defeat he went on to take the title at the expense of the losing finalist Chad Bassett who he put in all sorts of trouble running out a comfortable 3-0 victor. Both losing semi finalists Richard Beattie and Tomasz Halucha played brilliantly to brighten up a vibrant event.

Results from day one as follows:

Men's Band 1

Norbert Tofalvi (HUN) bt. David McBeath (Ha) 7-11, 11-6, 7-11, 11-9, 11-5

Women's Band 1

Zsuzsanna Vegh (HUN) bt. Chloe Whyte (Cv) 11-6, 11-6, 11-7

Men's Band 2

Dan O'Connell (WAL) bt. Wayne Mason (Ca) 11-5, 11-9, 11-5

Women's Band 2

Tressa Armitage (Ha) bt. Xue Bai (La) 11-8, 11-9, 11-5

Men's Band 3

Adam Nutland (Wo) bt. Pawel Orzechowski (La) 11-8, 11-8, 10-12, 11-5

Women's Band 3

Lucy Davidson (Dy) bt. Tressa Armitage (Ha) 8-11, 4-11, 11-9, 11-7, 12-10

Men's Band 4

Ernest Mpundu (Ys) bt. Sam Mabey (Np) 12-10, 11-5, 8-11, 11-9

Men's Band 5

Laurence Sweeney (Wa) bt. Simon Oyler (WAL) 11-8, 2-11, 12-10, 11-8

Men's Band 6

Aaron Marche (Nk) bt. Chad Bassett (Ca) 11-3, 11-5, 11-5

Picture 1: Norbert Tofalvi (HUN) and David McBeath (Ha)

Picture 2: Zsuzsanna Vegh (HUN) and Chloe Whyte (Cv)

Geoff Ware

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