

Walker retains Junior title in repeat final

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Posted On: November 24, 2012



Junior Boys Singles

Sam Walker retained the junior boys' singles title after coming from 2-0 behind to storm past last year's losing finalist Helshan Weerasinghe in a repeat of the 2011 final.

The junior boys singles was a quiet affair until the semi-final stage with all of the four seeds safely progressing to the last four without ever being extended to five games.

One of the few matches of note was David Thompson's remarkable comeback against Alec Ward in the last 16 where he came from 2-0 and 10-6 down to win 3-2 (9-11, 10-12, 13-11, 11-8, 11-6). Also worthy of note was Gabriel Achampong's run to the quarter-finals where he was only eventually stopped by Weerasinghe 3-1 (11-4, 6-11, 11-7, 11-9).

It was Weerasinghe who then won an epic four-game battle with George Downing, each game heading to deuce (11-9, 11-9, 10-12, 11-9), to reach the final where he once again met Walker.

Despite Walker losing the first game to Igor Morais in his semi-final, he won the next three with a change of gear to set up a repeat of the 2011 final.

Weerasinghe, desperate to avoid a repeat of the 3-0 loss last time, raced out of the blocks and blew the top seed out of the water with an 11-3 game. He charged clear again in the second 7-2 – holding his nerve for a 2-0 lead at 12-10.

It was then that Walker began to take control as he asserted himself on the game with a calming 11-5 third game. When the No. 1 junior also took the fourth 11-2, the momentum was firmly with Walker.

Sure enough, Walker won the final game 11-4 and inflicted another painful final defeat on the frustrated Weerasinghe.

Junior Girls Singles

Tin-Tin Ho added to her collection of national titles with a junior girls crown after beating Emily Bates in a five-game final.

She waltzed to the final stage, winning all her matches 3-0, including against the impressive Lois Peake in the semi-final.

Peake was fantastic in victories over both Tressa Armitage 3-2 (11-8, 11-8, 5-11, 7-11, 12-10) and Isobel Ashley 3-0

(12-10, 11-9, 11-8). What made her progress more spectacular was that she lost to Olivia Churchill 3-1 (9-11, 11-8, 11-6, 11-9) in the group stages.

In the other semi-final Bates beat Maria Tsaptsinos after an epic five-game thriller, which was only decided after a roller-coaster of a deciding game.

Earlier Tsaptsinos did well to hold her nerve against Vicky Smith 3-2 (11-9, 11-9, 6-11, 6-11, 11-8) to reach the semi-final where she took a 1-0 lead over Bates with an 11-5 game.

However, the more experienced Bates fought back and took the lead herself before being pegged back in an absorbing fourth game.

The final game seemed in Bates' control at 9-7 but Tsaptsinos created the first match point at 10-9. She made another at 11-10 and one more at 12-11 but could take neither as Bates made the final 3-2 (5-11, 12-10, 11-9, 9-11, 14-12).

In the final, Bates forced Tin-Tin to drop her first game of the tournament in an 11-8 opener before the cadet charged back to win games two and three 11-6 and 11-4.

With the title in her grasp at 9-6 up, Tin-Tin failed to convert as somehow Bates levelled the match 2-2 with a 12-10 game. That only halted the 14-year-old's progression though as she confidently won the decider 11-5 – showing no sign of nerves.

Junior Boys Doubles

Igor Morais and Danny Lawrence formed a perfect partnership to win the junior boys doubles title after another classic five-game encounter with Sam Walker and Liam McTiernan.

Both pairs comfortably advanced to the semi-final stage before finding tough opponents who respectively took the finalists all the way.

For Walker and McTiernan it was Laurence Sweeney and Adam Harrison who took them to five games 3-2 (2-11, 11-5, 9-11, 11-5, 11-7), while for Morais and Lawrence it was Helshan Weerasinghe and Sam Mabey who forced them to scrape through 3-2 (11-6, 12-10, 8-11, 6-11, 11-6).

A similar pattern followed in the final with little between the pairs as Walker and McTiernan took the opener 13-11 but Morais and Lawrence rallied to lead 2-1.

It wasn't over there though with the top seeds of Walker and McTiernan winning the fourth game 11-6 to take it to a decider. This time there was no stopping Morais and Lawrence as they held their nerve to win it 11-8.

Junior Girls Doubles

Tin-Tin Ho secured her second title of the day by partnering Maria Tsaptsinos to a comprehensive girls doubles title with a straight games win in the final.

The pair, in fact, won all of their games en route to the final in three games as they required minimum effort to claim the title in Hatfield.

Their final opponents, once again Emily Bates – who was partnered by Megan Knowles, were no real test in the final, although they could be pleased with their work earlier in the day after knocking out second seeds Vicky Smith and Tressa Armitage 3-0 (11-6, 11-6, 11-7)

Junior Mixed Doubles

Tin-Tin Ho secured a clean-sweep of titles on day one when she, and partner Helshan Weerasinghe won the mixed doubles crown after a confident 3-1 final win over Igor Morais and Vicky Smith.

The progression to the mixed doubles final was completely different depending on which side of the draw the

pairs were on.

While Weerasinghe and Tin-Tin had cruised to the final with three consecutive 3-0 victories, the path to the last stage was fraught with difficulty for Morais and Smith.

Their quarter-final win against Adam Curran and Janay Gibson was a roller-coaster with both pairings dominating one game, and then faltering in the other. Eventually Morais and Smith won through 3-2 (11-9, 5-11, 11-6, 6-11, 11-5) to reach the semi-final where they met the surprise package of Marcus Giles and Megan Knowles.

They had caused the shock of the round when they beat defending Champions Sam Walker and Tressa Armitage 3-1 (13-11, 8-11, 11-9, 12-10) during a wonderful exhibition of table tennis.

They built on this in the semi-final – taking Morais and Smith to the fifth game after 13-11, 6-11, 11-6, 4-11 games. However, despite a 10-8 and 11-10 lead, they were unable to convert their match points as the third seeds made the final.

The final was tight as could be expected. The opening game won 11-9 by Morais and Smith before the second game was returned 12-10 by Weerasinghe and Tin-Tin.

From there both Weerasinghe and Tin-Tin stepped it up to win the following two games and secure the title.

English Junior & Cadet National Championships Results

Junior Boys Singles

Sam Walker bt Helshan Weerasinghe 3-2 (3-11, 10-12, 11-5, 11-2, 11-4)

Junior Girls Singles

Tin-Tin Ho bt Emily Bates 3-2 (8-11, 11-6, 11-4, 10-12, 11-5)

Junior Boys Doubles

Igor Morais/Danny Lawrence bt Sam Walker/Liam McTiernan 3-2 (11-13, 11-7, 12-10, 6-11, 11-8)

Junior Girls Doubles

Tin-Tin Ho/Maria Tsaptsinos bt Emily Bates/Megan Knowles 3-0 (11-8, 11-5, 11-5)

Junior Mixed Doubles

Tin-Tin Ho/Helshan Weerasinghe bt Igor Morais/Vicky Smith 3-1 (9-11, 12-10, 11-6, 11-5)

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