

Action from the Woolwell Open

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Gavin Rumgay presents the Under 12 winner Harry Nicholls

The 2nd Woolwell Table Tennis open was recently held at Eggbuckland Community College in Plymouth with the qualification event and junior events being held on Friday 28th December. A large field of players entered the competition vying to reach the main groups joining the top seeds on Saturday 29th December.

The field was full of quality players with Hannah Hicks, Richard Marshall, Darren Reed, Dom Sussex and Paul Whiting facing the prospect of having to qualify for the main event. All of them managed to qualify to day 2 without too much difficulty.

The Junior event commenced with the under 18 under 15 and under 12s all playing in large groups so plenty of matches for the competitors with the under 18s and 15s vying to play in the staged finals on the Saturday night, so plenty at stake to share the stage with some of the best players in Great Britain.

The Saturday matches concluded with Number 1 seed Gavin Rumgay arriving early to kindly present the Under 12 medals to Cornish winner Harry Nicholls, runner up was Sam Drew.

Sunday's group matches commenced at 9.00am with the seeds entering the competition in groups of 4 with some really closely fought encounters. In one of the most closely fought battles Niall Cameron overcame the all out attacking Victor Shi Guang to top their group.

England number 3 lady Hannah Hicks challenged England Number 11 Damien Nicholls for top spot in their group but after an outstanding defensive display Damien just managed to take top spot in their group.

The resurgent Michael O'Driscoll took on Cornwall's ' Darren Reed and continued his good form overcoming the Cornishman's challenge, then followed it up with a hard fought and entertaining victory over the winner of the leading lady prize winner Hannah Hicks.

Plymouths' Richard Marshall sailed into the last 16 along with Mike Hugh and Harry Cutler to challenge the top seeds.

Number 2 seed Darius Knight entered the fray but had an early shock losing the 1st set of his encounter with

charismatic veteran Paul "The Octopus" Beck, but soon found his rhythm and comfortably won his group. He followed this up with a comfortable win over Plymouth's Mike Hugh.

Former Devon Number 1 Craig Bryant eased into the last 16 where he encountered Victor Shi Guang. After a very highly charged match Victor edged out Craig 11-9 in the final set. However he found Darius too hot to handle in the quarter finals losing 3 sets to 0.

Local favourite Paul Whiting gave number 1 seed Gavin Rumgay an early wakeup call in the last 16 with a partisan crowd cheering Paul on with some fantastic rallies; however the Scots' class was evident winning through 3 sets to 1. He followed this with a quarter final win over Scottish compatriot Niall Cameron.

The local crowd soon had something to cheer about though, when Woolwell number 1 Richard Marshall had the win of his career beating Damien Nicholls by 3 sets to 1 which brought the loudest cheer of the day by far, however in the last 8 he succumbed to England number 5 and gentle giant Chris Doran 3 sets to 1.

England Number 8 Matt Ware had gone about his business with classy efficiency winning his Group comfortably then despite losing a set to Devon's Dom Sussex found himself in the quarter final against Michael O'Driscoll. In an extremely vocal encounter Matt played some fantastic shots and in the 2nd set actually beat Michael 11-0 but in typical fashion Michael came back to level to 2 sets all but with the biggest scream of relief of the day Matt came through to win the final set and onto the semi final.

With the matches now reaching the staged finals the atmosphere was further increased with the introduction of some toe tapping music by our club wannabee DJ Dave Waddington who took over the introductions and entertained the spectators between sets which generally added to the great atmosphere being created.

The first semi final saw Gavin Rumgay take on Matt Ware in a high quality encounter but despite losing the 2nd set the Scotsman found his rhythm winning 3 sets to 1.

The second semi final saw Darius Knight take on Chris Doran in an equally enthralling battle with some tremendous rallies which had the 150 plus spectators mesmerised but Doran ran out of steam succumbing to Darius 11-13/11-9/9-11/8-11.

During the break between the staged semi finals the Under 18 Boys and Under 15 boys finals were played with Ollie Buddell beating Jordan Bone and Ed Haskell beating Carl Baldry, followed by the Veterans final when the classy Mike O'Driscoll overcame Plymouth's Kevin Buddell in the final.

The 3rd and 4th place playoff match featured Chris Doran and Matt Ware with some scintillating attacking rallies both giving there all but an increasingly weary Doran found the explosive Matt Ware too hot to handle and succumbed 8/11,11/8,9/11,10/12 to the popular Dorset player.

The stage was finally set for a fantastic final which again included last year's runner up Darius Knight trying to overcome top seed Gavin Rumgay for the £1,000 winner's cheque. Darius came out of the blocks on fire taking the first set 11-5 and took an early 6-2 lead in the second set but Gavin kept his focus and came back to win 11-8. Gavin was in his ascendancy and made little or no errors and piled the pressure on Darius with some exceptional retrieving from all over the court, much to the delight of the crowd taking the third set again 11-8. Both players were now in top form with the rallies increasing in quality and intensity when Gavin found match point but Darius fought back to deuce, however 2 points later Gavin Rumgay was the Woolwell 2012 Champion.

Local Egguckland ward Councillor Ian Bowyer presented the prizes and in his speech heaped praise on a fantastic event which he and his wife thoroughly enjoyed.

So in conclusion another high quality and extremely successful event at the ambitious Plymouth Club which attracted some of the best players in Great Britain at a fantastic venue, with an enthusiastic team of volunteers in the background, special thanks go to the catering volunteers Debbie Whiting, Vicky Wilson, Laura Bone, Wendy Haskell and Jan Marshall who provided hot food and beverages all weekend. Referee Shaun Haskell with a team of volunteer umpires. Helen and Gary Lambert, for running a club fund raising raffle. Liz May, Paul Whiting, Kevin Buddell and especially Gary Wilson for organising the event. Not forgetting our DJ and announcer Dave Waddington who now has a job for life.

Biggest thanks of all go out to all the players who travelled from near and far to treat us to some of the best Table Tennis ever seen in the city and to all the spectators who supported the event and added to the incredible atmosphere.

We hope this event has now become a firm date in the Table Tennis tournament calendar and hope to run the event again making it bigger and better in 2013.

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