

Four booked places at BATTs for WCPP

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Billy Pegg, Ashley Stokes, Jimmy Walsh and Wayne Shaw earn WCPP places.

There were four places up for grabs in the Matchroom Event sponsored World Championships of Ping Pong (the Sandpaper bat branch of the sport).

With this in mind 64 players from all over the country, and a quality entrant from Holland, ventured down to the BATTs Club in Harlow on Sunday 16 December 2012 attempting to earn one of these four prestigious qualifying places.

The initial group stages were played best of three games up to 11 points whereas the qualifying event was played over what has become the expected format for Hardbat table tennis – the best of three games up to 21 points. The first two players in each group qualified for the competition proper.

The initial stages threw up plenty of shocks, no more so than in the hotly contested Group 8 which England no. two Veteran Chris Bartram (Kent) was expected to dominate.

As early as the fifth game in this group it was clear that Chris Bartram might be in trouble. Jo-Jo Seniorin (Middlesex) dented the hopes of Bartram 11-9, 7-11, 11-8 whereas Seniorin had previously been well beaten by Tony West (Essex) 11-3, 11-7. Things got even worse for Chris Bartram in game no.10 when he was beaten by the hugely improved Tim Diss (Suffolk) 8-11, 11-5, 11-9 in the biggest shock of the day.

West eventually retained his 100% record in this group by beating Bartram 11-7, 6-11, 11-9 with Seniorin finishing second and Bartram in third. Costas Papantoniou (Middlesex) finished fourth with John Tandler (Essex) in fifth place and Tim Diss in sixth position.

Group 1 was dominated by Billy Pegg (Shropshire) with Luke Walsh (Herts) finishing in second place. Pegg looked to be in trouble against surprise package Django Fung (Essex) who had stormed into a 7-2 lead in the decider. It wasn't quite enough though and Billy pulled himself together at just the right moment. He won 11-9, 12-14, 11-8. Luke Walsh made sure of second place as he beat Fung 11-7, 11-7.

Group 2 saw Fred Dove (Essex) qualify with some comfort. His games record of 14-0 speaks for itself. Fred Dove beat third-placed Chris Lewis (Surrey) 11-8, 11-8 and second-placed Ashley Stokes (Essex) surprisingly comfortably 11-6, 11-5.

There was an upset in Group 3 as well when the favourite Darren Griffin (Gloucs) was relegated to third place. Griffin missed out against top-quality Dutch entrant Theo Quast 9-11, 11-7, 1-11 and he also lost to the very impressive Wayne Shaw 8-11, 11-7, 7-11. Quast made sure that he topped the group by beating Wayne Shaw

(Suffolk) 13-11, 11-7.

Group 4 was dominated by Jimmy Walsh (Herts) who came out on top with seven wins and a games record of 14-2. James Denyer (Essex) finished second despite losing to Rik James (Essex) 7-11, 11-9, 11-13 as Rik suffered two early defeats against Marjorie Dawson (Essex) and Clifford Grant (Middlesex).

Richard Hutchinson (Suffolk) topped Group 5 despite losing to Rob Fearn 7-11, 13-11, 5-11. Hutchinson sealed top place by beating Martin Gunn (Kent) 11-7, 8-11, 12-10 in the very last game of the group. Matt Squires (Warwickshire) finished third and Rob Fearn (Notts) came fourth.

In Group 6 Alim Hirji (the England no. 21 from Hertfordshire) came out on top with a 14-1 record whilst Rory Scott (Sussex) finished a very impressive second. Scott beat England no. 23 Emran Hussain (Essex) 4-11, 19-17, 11-9 and David Tiplady (Cams) 7-11, 11-8, 11-5. Scott completed an excellent day's work by getting the better of Keith Baker (Shropshire) 11-9, 11-6.

John Payne (Essex) came out on top in Group 7 with a games record of 14-1 whilst Adam Nutland, the England ranked no. 35 player and one of the rising stars of the sport, finished second.

Payne beat Nutland (Worcs) surprisingly comfortably 11-7, 11-5 having previously defeated Shu Huang (Kent) 6-11, 11-6, 11-8 in one of the best games in the group stages. England no. 7 Under 13 Boy, the 10 year-old Ethan Walsh (Herts) came a very creditable fifth having recorded wins over more of the veterans brigade – Steve Kerns (Essex), Nigel Hodder (Suffolk) and Anthony Corbin (Surrey).

With a mere four players gaining the right of passage to the World Championships event it was clear that some very good Hard Bat players would miss out. Billy Pegg wasn't one of them. He recorded a 21-15, 21-18 win over Jo-Jo Senorin and a clinical 21-9, 21-6 victory against James Denyer to book his place. Denyer had earlier picked up an absolute 'gem' of a win. He had beaten Richard Hutchison 21-15, 21-16.

Ashley Stokes also booked his place in the World Championships. He beat John Payne 21-13, 21-18 and Dutch Visitor Theo Quast 21-15, 21-7. Quast had ended the hopes of surprise package Rory Scott 21-12, 21-11.

The third quarter-final ensured that one member of the Walsh family would be playing at the Alexandra Palace. England no. 20 Veteran Jimmy beat his elder son Luke 21-19, 21-17. Luke had earlier ended the hopes of England no. 41 Veteran Tony West 21-16, 10-21, 21-18 – yet another victory against the odds.

The fourth and final qualifier – Wayne Shaw is perhaps not as well known as the other three. Nevertheless he is an outstanding exponent of play with a Hard Bat.

Shaw finished with two tremendous wins. First he beat Alim Hirji 19-21, 21-15, 22-20 and secondly he got the better of Adam Nutland 11-21, 21-13, 21-14. Nutland had previously ended the hopes of the man who has done so much to promote Hardbat Table Tennis – Fred Dove 22-20, 21-19.

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