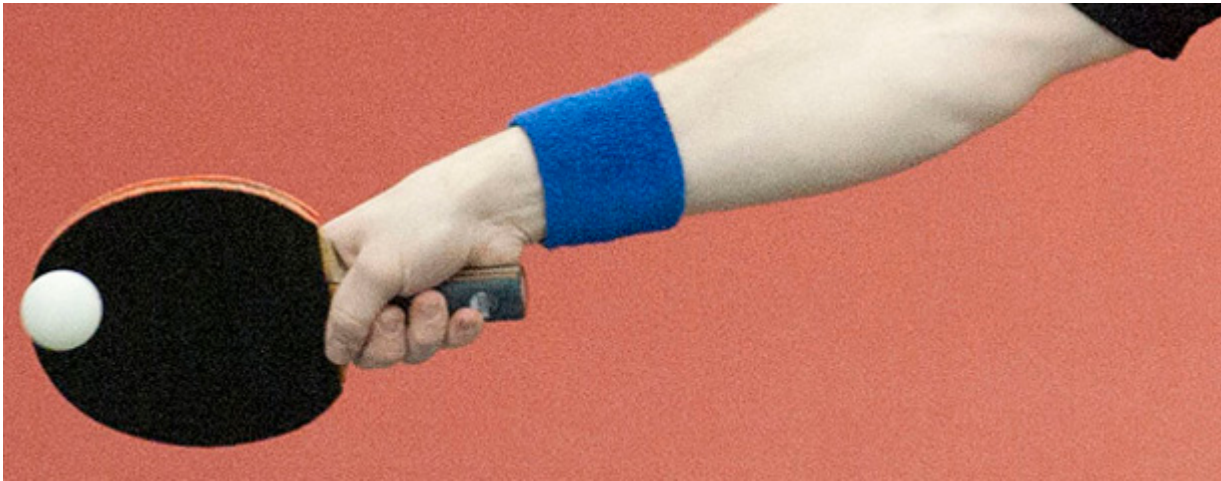


Abbott eyes titles at Chelmsford Closed again

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Alex Abbott – can he win all three titles again?

It's that time of year again, and the 2013 M&G Investments Chelmsford & District Table Tennis League Closed Championships are taking place over the weekend of Friday 18 to Sunday 20 January 2013 at the Anglia Ruskin University (Mildmay Sports Hall, Bishops Hall Lane, Rivermead Campus, Chelmsford commencing at 19.00 hours on the Friday night).

Admission is free and hopefully many former players will be able to pop in to observe the action.

The star of last year's tournament – Alex Abbott (Maldon) will be out to regain the three titles he won last year – an unprecedented trio of wins in the Mens' Singles, Veterans' Singles and Over 50s Singles.

His main rival in the Mens' Singles should again be last year's runner-up – Steve Joslin (ECC). Four-times former Champion David Cole (OCs), 2003 Champion Keiran Lally (Maldon) as well as Gary Young (Elmtree Excalibur – a semi-finalist last year) and four-times Braintree Champion Paul Davison (Bocking) should also feature strongly.

The other seeded players are Paul Sayer (Maldon), Mindaugas Sinkus (Maldon), Kevin Gowlett (Bocking), Brandon Crouchman (OCs), John Holland (Elmtree Excalibur), Michael Andrews (Dambury) and Steve Kerns (ECC).

The likes of Mark Mulley (ECC), Gary Cattermole (Elmtree Excalibur), Peter Ballard (Maldon) and Andrew Halling (Hatfield Peveler) are all unseeded this year.

Group no. two promises to be the most hotly contested of all. Gary Young will undoubtedly be strongly tested by Peter Ballard, Wasim Qureshi (Chelmsford) and John Tendler (Elmtree Excalibur).

Julie Johnson (Chelmsford) will be looking to win an amazing twentieth Ladies Singles title. Fellow Essex Veterans County player Linda Attridge (Elmtree Excalibur) should be her opponent in the final.

The action commences on the Friday night with the Veterans' (Over 40s) Singles and it is hard to look beyond Alex Abbott and David Cole when picking the potential finalists. Nevertheless, the standard of play shows an impressive depth and the likes of Paul Sayer (Maldon), Kevin Gowlett, Gary Young, David Evans (ECC), John Cleasby (Maldon), Ian Whiteside (Danbury) and Steve Kerns will all be looking to make their mark.

The Mens' Doubles is often one of the most open events of the weekend. The Champions in 2011 and 2012 – Steve Joslin and Michael Andrews will be strongly tested by the second seeds – Alex Abbott and Paul Sayer as well as 2010 Champions Keiran Lally and Mindaugas Sinkus and the four-times Braintree Champions – Paul Davison

and Kevin Gowlett.

Other strong pairings include – David Cole/Ian Whiteside, Steve Kerns/Gary Young and Gary Cattermole/Peter Mynard.

Alex Abbott will be a very strong favourite to win the Over 50s Singles although Andrew Halling, Terry Dowsett (OCs), John Tandler (Elmtree Excalibur), John Cleasby and Peter Ballard are all capable of causing an upset or two on their day.

The Division Two Down Singles should also be very well contested. It is an event in which traditionally the favourites have struggled to impose themselves.

Expect the likes of Waseem Qureshi, Robert Burton (OCs), Robert Shrimpton (Chelmsford), Julie Johnson and James Hicks (ECC) all to be challenging for honours. Another player to look out for could be John Tandler (Elmtree Excalibur) – a newcomer to the Chelmsford League, but well known throughout the County.

It is the defenders – John Tandler and Robert Burton who should be amongst those to beat in the Division Three Down Singles. Other players who could feature include Tony Hallett (Elmtree Excalibur), Scott Dowsett (Elmtree Excalibur) and the Maldon duo of Tom Elder and Brian Riedling.

The prize for reaching the Under 21 Singles final is the appearance on Finals Night. Brandon Crouchman (OCs) is a clear favourite but he won't take Robert Shrimpton, Scott Dowsett or James Austin too lightly.

Brandon Crouchman should also regain his Junior Boys Singles title after having to miss last year's tournament. His most likely rivals are Scott Dowsett (Elmtree Excalibur), Chris Denyer (Chelmsford), Wiktor Delimat (Elmtree Excalibur) and Ryan Gooday (Chelmsford).

British League Premier Division action returns to Essex for its single day's play on Sunday 20 January 2013 at the BATTs Table Tennis Club, The Norman Booth Centre, Elderfield, Mulberry Green, Old Harlow, CM17 0EY.

The action commences at 11.00 hours and the admission is free. The leaders B-BATT Pavilion I (15 points) – are led by the redoubtable 'Big D' – Chris Doran (14 out of 16 wins) who will have greatly enjoyed his magnificent run to the semi-finals of the recent Matchroom sponsored World Championship of Ping Pong (Hard Bat event) at the Alexandra Palace.

Chris has received excellent support from Michael O' Driscoll (11/12 wins), Niall Cameron (7/12 wins), Helshan Weerasinghe (7/8 wins) and Giovanni Le Borgne (5/8 wins). They face last year's Champions Fusion I in the morning and two-times winners Drumchapel Glasgow I in the afternoon.

Steve Kerns

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