

Reeves achieves in Bristol Hard Bat

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Posted On: [January 14, 2013](#)



Dave Reeves was triumphant last weekend

The Bristol & District Table Tennis Association held their seventh annual Hard Bat competition on Saturday 12 January 2013 at the Bristol Civil Service TT Club, with players participating from all divisions from the Premier Division down to Division Eight.

The traditional use of identical bats ensures that this popular event remains a fair and unique competition for all concerned, as well as continuing to be a great advertisement for the nostalgic devotees of this branch of table tennis.

The tried and tested format of seeding all players into groups of four with the top two progressing to the main competition (*competing for the John Mycroft Boucher Trophy*) and the lower two to the plate competition (*competing for the James Hamilton Trophy*) also made for continuous and competitive play throughout most of the day, and some were even looking to ensure their places for next year's event before the warm-up!

As for the matches themselves, last season's main competition winner, Martin Gunn, was otherwise engaged at the Hereford VETTS tournament, which paved the way for the possibility of yet another new name on the trophy.

However, the 2011 champion and number three seed, Steve Hall, was looking to be the first player to win the title twice. Something that almost ended after a first round wobble, being the only top four seed to lose a set to the 2011 Plate champion, Terry Toghill. However, Hall did progress to one of the three-way semi-finals against Chris Edwards and Paul Hooper, where he won both games and booked his place in the final.

Meanwhile, last season's runner-up, Dave Reeves, was encountering no real problems at all as he eased through his three-way semi-final against his wife, Michele Reeves, and opponent James Ashton, to set up an intriguing confrontation.

The main final, therefore, between Steve Hall and Dave Reeves proved to be a great spectacle and a fantastic advertisement for the game as it used to be played. With brilliant attacking play combined with superb defending throughout from both players, it was a shame that one of them had to lose. As it turned out, the steadier Dave Reeves triumphed in two straight games (21-13, 21-13) and therefore became the 2013 champion. *(The whole match will shortly be available to view on YouTube, alongside footage from our last two finals, for anyone interested).*

The Plate competition final resulted in a 21-16, 19-21, 21-14 win for Division Seven's Andy Cooper, over the Premier Division player, Len Vowles, which just shows what a great leveler the use of identical bats can be.

The day concluded with a 'quick-fire' one-point tournament, which seems to be in vogue at the moment. Deployed were two sandpaper bats that were used at the previous weekend's World Championships of Ping Pong at Alexandra Palace to make it 'extra special'.

The delighted winner turned out to be Marcus Berry. At its conclusion, everyone present felt that this could very well become a regular feature at the end of next year's Hard Bat competition too, so another great day was had by all.

John Ruderham

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