

New venue for Colchester Championships

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NEW VENUE FOR COLCHESTER CHAMPIONSHIPS

This year's Colchester & District Table Tennis league Closed Tournament will be at a new venue, the Holmwood House School Sports Hall, home of the Tollgate Table Tennis Club. With a record entry of over fifty players in the Men's Singles the hall will house eight tables including two practice tables allowing sixteen groups with all players now playing at the opening stage, winners of each group going into a straight knockout.

Defending Champion and number one seed is Andy Warner of Tollgate who will face stiff competition potentially in the form of number two seed Steve Joslin (H2O Rowhedge) recent Chelmsford runner-up and the player Warner beat in last year's final. Gary Young's (Gt Horkesley) prolific league form makes him a realistic semi-finalist with Greg Green (Tollgate) also enjoying his most consistent form, winning more than any other player in Division One.

Former Essex number one junior Keiron Lally (Tollgate) makes his first appearance for several years and Richard Goodhand (Gt Horkesley) is capable of beating anyone with his unique style. Another realistic contender is James Denyer (St James) who could become only the second player to win both Junior and Men's titles in the same year.

Current Clacton champion Kevin Gowlett (H2O Rowhedge) is always a handful and Michael Andrews (H2O Rowhedge) was a recent semi-finalist in Chelmsford. 2010 champion Antony Greenwood (H2O Rowhedge) has played very few matches this season but will be a threat and add 50+ champion Nigel Hodder, Colin Stallwood (both Tollgate), Ian Whiteside and Rob Bozier (both Pegasus) any one of these could progress deep into the competition. Gary Cattermole and David Moss (both H2O Rowhedge) complete the sixteen seeds that on paper, should make for a very interesting knockout stage.

In the Ladies Singles defending champion and winner for the past three years Aimee Sparkes (Gt Horkesley) is favourite to retain her title. Aimee's league form has been exceptional, winning the third highest number of games in the top flight. England number five veteran Gill Locke (St James), twenty-two time winner Sue Welham and England U13 number one Jane Li (both Tollgate) complete the seeds going into four groups. Former Colchester and Ipswich champion Janet Faiers (Gt Horkesley) and former Chelmsford Ladies champion Holly Stubbings (Tollgate) are both capable of causing upsets with Jane Li, looking to be the first female to win both Junior and Senior titles at the same Colchester tournament.

Defending champions Nigel Hodder and Kevin Gowlett are top seeds in the Men's Doubles with Keiron Lally and Greg Green, Andy Warner and Gary Young and twice previous winners Antony Greenwood and Michael Andrews posing the main competition as well as seven time winners David Moss and John Andrews (H2O Rowhedge).

Aimee Sparkes and Janet Faiers are looking to retain their Ladies Doubles title but number two seeds Gill Locke and Annabelle Rodriguez may have something to say about that.

One of the most hotly contested events will be the Mixed Doubles with the strongest field in many a year competing. Mother and son combination of Gill Locke and James Denyer will be defending their title but anyone of; three times champions Sue Welham and Gary Young, Aimee Sparkes and Colin Bennett, Greg Green and Jane Li, Andy Warner and Holly Stubbings or Annabelle Rodriguez and Colin Stallwood could well win it.

Andy Warner will be competing for the first time in the 40+ Singles and with reigning champion Mike Wright (Gt Horkesley) out injured, the main competition will come from the newly qualified Gary Young and Colin Stallwood as well Kevin Gowlett and 2011 winner Nigel Hodder.

In the 50+ event two-time champion Hodder will be defending his title following a lay-off through injury, his main threat coming from Ian Whiteside, who has won three times previously. Whiteside is likely to go up against four-time champion Alan Burgess (H2O Rowhedge) in the 60+ event.

James Denyer is odds-on to retain his Junior title but don't right off the talented H2O Rowhedge duo of Jermaine Fearon and Josh Sidki who have stepped up to the first Division with aplomb!

Fearon and Sidki will start marginal favourites to win the Junior Doubles but watch out for Denyer and the improving Adam Cuthbert (H2O Rowhedge) to push them all the way.

Jane Li is red hot favourite to retain her Junior Girls title, facing Gracie Edwards, recent addition to the England training squad along with Chloe Andrews, sister of Michael and a Colchester tournament debut for Lauren James, daughter of the prolific Rik James. Likewise Li should retain her Cadet title.

There is a good turnout in both the Division Two and Three Singles events where Gt Horkesley's Wudong Liu and Steve Holland are the number one seeds respectively. Gilberd's find of the season Neil Huatan is firm favourite to win the Division Four crown as he has only lost once in the league this season.

The Tournament starts with the Handicap, Junior and Veteran's events on Saturday and the Closed Championships and Divisional Singles on Sunday with the Finals and presentations by the Mayor of Colchester starting at the earlier than usual time of 6.30pm on the Sunday evening. Spectators and former players are welcome to attend, refreshments are provided!

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