

Helshan becomes schoolboy champion

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Posted On: April 24, 2013



HELSHAN NATIONAL UNDER 16 SCHOOLBOY CHAMPION

Sixteen-year-old Helshan Weerasinghe from Tonbridge and a pupil of The Judd School, was a comfortable winner of the under 16 boys singles event of the Butterfly English Schools Individual Championships, held at The Dome, Doncaster, over the weekend. In the final Helsan, who trains at the SE Performance Centre, High Weald Academy, Cranbrook, overcame Gabriel Achampang (Middlesex) in 3 close games.

Another title went to a Kent player when Emma Tovey (Mayfield Grammar School, Gavesend) lifted the under 19 girls' singles with a 3 straight win over Nicole Finn (West Yorkshire).

Emma Torkington of King's School Canterbury went out in the semi-finals of the girls' under 16 singles to Tin-Tin Ho, while Josh Bennett from Polegate, East Sussex, who also attends the SE Performance Centre, was only very narrowly defeated by Hugo Pang (Dorset) over 5 games in the semis of the under 13 boys' singles.

Dan Lawrence, 15, from Tonbridge (Hugh Christie Technology College), a member of the Byng Hall Club, Tunbridge Wells and of the SE Performance Centre, was very unlucky to be knocked out in dramatic fashion in the first round of the under 19 boys' singles after easily winning his group.

Facing former Hong Kong junior international Bryan Kwan, who is currently boarding at St Bede's, Hailsham, Dan took the first two games and was leading in the third and fourth, but Kwan, who trains little now owing to A Level studies, was continually gaining in strength and confidence to level the match score. Then with big attacking forehands and Lawrence getting nervous, Kwan leapt into a 10-6 lead.

But Dan fought back, saving 4 match points and gaining a match point of his own to go 11-10. However Kwan claimed the last 3 points, including two starting with 'float' serves (i.e. low spin serves disguised to look like heavy spin), and ultimately the match. Kwan went on to be the losing finalist.

Helshan's younger brother Chamika Weerasinghe, of Yardley Court Prep School, Somerhill, Tonbridge, reached the quarter-finals of the under 11 boys' singles, where he was put out by Louis Moyes (Norfolk).

On Sunday at the National Regional Cadet Squad Championships, also held at the Dome Doncaster, the South East came 6th out of 10 regions, but Josh Bennett was their star, winning all of his 5 under boys' singles.

By Ken Muhr

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