

Clacton & District TTL Closed Report

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Three stars shine bright



James Denyer & Gill Locke with their awards

Kevin Gowlett, Gill Locke and James Denyer were the stars of the Clacton and District Table Tennis League's 2013 Closed Championships held last weekend at the Coastal Academy Sports Hall.

Gowlett took the Mens and Veterans Singles titles for a second year running, Locke notched up a Ladies' hat-trick – the first time this has been achieved since 1994 – whilst Denyer won the Mens and Mixed Doubles, and the Junior Singles and Doubles.

In the **Mens Singles** the top four seeds took their appointed places in the semi-finals.

In the first, reigning champion Gowlett faced Colin Stallwood and raced into a two-set lead. A determined Stallwood recovered well to take the tie into a decider but Gowlett held firm and, by the narrowest of margins, won through 11-9 in the fifth, breathing a huge sigh of relief in the process.

The second semi-final saw sixteen-year old James Denyer take on 2010 and 2011 champion Greg Green. But Denyer never allowed his opponent to settle and won in three-straight.

In a final of contrasting styles – the phlegmatic Gowlett and the athletic Denyer – both players stretched every sinew to gain that important advantage, both shared the good fortune of nets and edges, both produced a pulsating match that had the spectators on the edge of their seats.

When Denyer took a two set to one lead, it looked as though there might be a fairy-tale ending for the Clacton

junior. But Gowlett's resolve stood firm, fighting his way back to a 3-2 (11-9, 9-11, 7-11, 11-8, 11-8) victory to take his third Mens Singles title in six years.

The beaten quarter-finalists were John Patrick, Colin Webber, Kevin James and Felipe Rodriguez.



Men's Singles Champion Kevin Gowlett in action

The final of the **Veterans Singles** was a repeat of the Mens Singles semi-final between Gowlett and Stallwood. Alas for Stallwood, playing in his first Clacton Veterans' event, he was unable to replicate his performance in the Mens Singles and Gowlett ran out a comfortable 3-0 (11-7, 11-3, 11-6) winner.

Colin Webber and Gill Locke played well to reach the semi-finals, Locke's good form a precursor of what was to come in the Ladies' events.

The group stages of the **Ladies Singles** produced two surprises with Sandie Isaac and Gracie Edwards unexpectedly topping their groups.

And the surprises continued into the knock-out phase. Sandie Isaac edged out Tricia Salter 11-9 in the fifth in Round One and then, in a nail-biting semi-final, she eliminated former champion and second seed Sue Welham 12-10 in the fifth, one of the shocks of the Championships.

Facing reigning champion Gill Locke in the final, Sandie continued to employ the aggressive tactics that had stood her in good stead. Her courage brought her success in the first set but the experienced Locke fought back to gain control, running out a 3-1 (9-11, 11-2, 11-4, 11-7) winner.

The **Ladies Doubles** final was a repeat of 2012, Gill Locke and Annabelle Rodriguez meeting, and defeating, Sue Welham and Sandie Isaac. But whereas last season the match was settled in three-straight, this year it went to the wire, the winning score of 3-2 (11-6, 11-13, 12-10, 9-11, 11-6) reflecting a match of top-notch women's table tennis.

A special mention here for Lucy Burton and Gracie Edwards who gave Welham and Isaac a scare in Round One before losing 11-6 in the fifth.

The final of the **Mixed Doubles** was another high-class affair between the top seeds and last year's beaten finalists James Denyer and Gill Locke, and number two seeds Greg Green and Sue Welham.

The final see-sawed throughout and, with the four players firing on all cylinders, produced cracking entertainment for the spectators, Denyer and Locke eventually winning 3-2 (8-11, 11-5, 14-12, 10-12, 11-6).

Alas for Green and Welham, they both finished yet a second doubles' runners-up trophy, whilst Denyer and Locke became only the second mother-son combination to take the Mixed Doubles title, the first being Jenny and Steven Higgins in 1991.

So Gowlett had two trophies, Locke had three – now it was Denyer's turn to take four.

The top four pairs reached the semi-finals of the **Mens Doubles** – and two classic semi-finals they turned out to be.

In the first, number one seeds Greg Green and Colin Stallwood faced last year's beaten finalists, James Denyer and Felipe Rodriguez. In a match that couldn't have been closer, Denyer and Rodriguez snatched it at the death, winning 3-2 (12-10, 9-11, 2-11, 12-10, 13-11).

The second semi-final was just as tight with Kevin Gowlett and Kevin James – who'd scraped through 11-8 in the fifth in Round Two against Alan Burgess and Colin Beaumont – against Gary Cattermole and John Pattrick. Once again it was the less-fancied pair who edged it, Cattermole and Pattrick winning another close five-setter 3-2 (12-10, 7-11, 8-11, 11-2, 12-10).

The final proved equally stirring and, although settled in four sets, was no less entertaining, with Cattermole and Pattrick producing some outrageous winning shots. But Denyer and Rodriguez, determined to make up for a disappointing performance in last year's final, showed greater consistency to take the title 3-1 (9-11, 11-8, 11-4, 11-9).

The **Junior Singles** final saw James Denyer succeed again at the expense of a member of the Hume family – last year Sam, this year Paul.

Although Denyer was a hot favourite, Hume put up stern resistance and made his opponent fight for every point. In a match littered with entertaining back-of-the-court rallies, Denyer won 3-1 (11-9, 11-3, 7-11, 11-7), a fourth successive title for this exceptionally-talented young player.

Amazingly Denyer had never won a **Junior Doubles** title having been runner-up with three different partners in the last four years. This year he was partnered by Adam Cuthbert and, in the final, they found themselves in opposition to Paul and Sam Hume, last year's surprise winners.

The Hume brothers took the first set and, for a moment, it looked as though another shock was on the cards. But Denyer and Cuthbert rallied to win 3-1 (7-11, 11-4, 11-9, 11-5).

There was a good showing from Tom Burton and Kelvin Olano in the semi-final who competed all the way to take the Humes to a fifth set.

For winning an unprecedented four trophies, and coming so close in the Mens Singles, James Denyer was deservedly presented with the **Victor Trophy** for the outstanding performance of the Tournament.



Phil Smith en route to the Restricted Singles title

The **Restricted Singles** are not seeded but the top two players, Gary Cattermole and Phil Smith, made it through to the final – and provided the spectators with a treat of a match.

Smith, a losing finalist in 2003 and 2006, proved that on his day he's a match for most top-flight players and, in a no-holds-barred encounter, he deservedly won 3-1 (5-11, 11-6, 11-6, 14-12).

For Phil it was a case of 'keeping it in the family', taking the trophy his son Mark had won twelve months ago. And once again, there's a new name on the trophy – since the event was introduced in 1991, no player has won it twice.

Gary Stallwood played well to reach the semi-finals, defeating Stewart Murray, John Owen and Paul Meikle before losing to Cattermole.

However, Stallwood had no such good fortune in the Division Two Singles. Twice a previous winner in 2006 and 2008, number one seed Stallwood was eliminated in Round One by Sam Hume who went on to the semi-finals – where his journey was ended by older brother Paul.

In the final Paul met Lawford veteran Paul Hewitt whose solid defending had been impressive throughout the day. But Hewitt had no answer to Hume's attacking loops, Hume succeeding 3-0 (11-9, 11-7, 11-7).

It was a merited reward for Hume who, as well as beating his younger brother, had eliminated tough opposition in Ian Fielder and David North on his way to the final.

Hume also becomes only the third player in forty years to achieve the feat of winning the Division Three and Division Two Singles titles in successive season. Martin Hogg did it in 1984 and 1985, as did Paul Bellinger in 2000 and 2001.

There was a shock in the **Division Three Singles** where Gracie Edwards, fresh from winning the under-11 National Schools title in Doncaster last week, defeated top seed Tom Burton in the semi-final. Her 3-1 (13-11, 11-8, 7-11, 11-5) victory was fully-merited, showing fine controlled hitting against an opponent unbeaten in the League this season.

But Gracie could not keep the momentum in the final where she met second seed, Kevin Olano who'd eliminated

three of the League's senior players, Brian Baines, Sheila Howe and Allen Denyer, on his way to the final.

In the final, Olano showed experience, composure and not inconsiderable talent, to win the day 3-1 (11-9, 9-11, 11-9, 11-5).

It was his third successive final, having beaten Tom Burton in 2011 and lost to Paul Hume last year.

For the sixth time in ten years, the final was contested by two juniors.

With reigning champion and second seed Colin Dearman ousted by Terry May in Round One, the **Super-Veterans Singles** final was a shoot-out between Alan Burgess and Fred Button, players who've both won this title twice.

The two players had also met in the final two years ago when Button had won close in five. But this time, displaying all his guile, determination and doggedness, he needed one set less to win 3-1 (12-10, 10-12, 11-8, 11-8).

Thus Button joins John Long and Brian Thiel as players who've won the Super-Veterans title three times.

Colin Beaumont put in a good performance, reaching the semi-final by beating both George Kalli and Terry May.

Once again Paul Newbould Planning and Building Design Services were the main sponsors for the Championships, organised with quiet efficiency by the top table of Brian Rowlen, Shirley Rowlen, and David Wilkin.

2013 CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

Mens Singles: K Gowlett beat J Denyer 11-9, 9-11, 7-11, 11-8, 11-8.

Ladies Singles: G Locke bt S Isaac 3-1 (9-11, 11-2, 11-4, 11-7)

Mens Doubles: J Denyer/F Rodriguez bt G Cattermole/J Patrick 3-1 (9-11, 11-8, 11-4, 11-9)

Ladies Doubles: G Locke/A Rodriguez bt S Welham/S Isaac 3-2 (11-6, 11-13, 12-10, 9-11, 11-6)

Mixed Doubles: J Denyer/G Locke bt G Green/S Welham 3-2 (8-11, 11-5, 14-12, 10-12, 11-6)

Veterans Singles: K Gowlett bt C Stallwood 3-0 (11-7, 11-3, 11-6)

Super-Veterans Singles: F Button bt A Burgess 3-1 (12-10, 10-12, 11-8, 11-8)

Junior Singles: J Denyer bt P Hume 3-1 (11-9, 11-3, 7-11, 11-7)

Junior Doubles: J Denyer/A Cuthbert bt P Hume/S Hume 3-1 (7-11, 11-4, 11-9, 11-5)

Division Two Singles: P Hume bt P Hewitt 3-0 (11-9, 11-7, 11-7)

Division Three Singles: K Olano bt G Edwards 3-1 (11-9, 9-11, 11-9, 11-5)

Restricted Singles: P Smith bt G Cattermole 3-1 (6-11, 11-6, 11-6, 14-12)

Victor Trophy: J Denyer

Tony Oswick

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