

Mixed fortunes for South East stars on School Games Day 1

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Posted On: September 13, 2013



The teams lining up ready at Ponds Forge, Sheffield

The first day of the 2013 Sainsbury's School Games Table Tennis competition almost threw up a few huge surprises as the much-fancied England South East boys' team had to battle their way into top spot.

Both the South East boys (Helshan Weerasinghe, Daniel Lawrence, Marcus Giles and Jared Patel) and the South East girls (Tin-Tin Ho, Lois Peake, Emma Torkington and Yuki Wat) began play as the dominant force to be reckoned with during the team competitions at Ponds Forge on Friday. However, the boys found the going tough, dropping five matches before finally securing a berth in the semi-finals as winners of Group J.

Their problems began in the first match with Wales, who also qualified for the semi-finals as runners-up, after Conor Edwards and Ryan Oylar gave the Welshmen a 2-0 lead. Although the South East side fought back, the opportunity arose for Chris Griffith, the no. 3 in the team, to seal a shock victory when he led Giles 2-1 and 10-8.

With the overall score 3-2 to the Welsh quartet, a defeat would have been terminal for the South East boys, however, they were rescued when Giles turned his match around – saving four match points in the process during the 17-15 fourth game, to ultimately lead the side to a tense 4-3 victory.

Joining Wales and South East in the semi-finals are Group K winners England Midlands and runners-up England North East.

Midlands, defending the team title they won at ExCel in the 2012 Sainsbury's School Games (after addition of girls and disability results), won all three matches 7-0 to state their intent on the title. Led by second seed Sam Mabey, they remained undefeated with Adam Harrison, Tom Jarvis and Alex Ramsden all providing ample support.



Lois Peake in action for the Girls' Team favourites, South East

The beginning of the Girls' Team events were far more predictable with England South East and England South West cruising through their respective groups on top – seemingly set for a meeting in the final.

Standout performers South East won all their matches 7-0 while South West were able to win 7-0, 6-1, 6-1 to confidently make Saturday's semi-finals. English junior international Maria Tsaptsinos remains unbeaten for the South West who are hoping to repeat the Girls' Team triumph from 2012. With Letitia McMullan, Jazmin Johns and Bethany Wilson all performing they could yet be in with a shout of upsetting the favourites, South East.

England Midlands and Northern Ireland will also contest the semi-finals on Saturday morning.

Finally, in the disability team event it is Wales who are currently on top with four wins out of four in the round robin competition. Led by Welsh player, Nicole Hall as coach, the trio of Lawrence John, Ashley Wray and Cellan Hall have only lost once between them during four competent victories.

With just three matches left to play on Saturday, the challenge could come down to England Midlands who have lost just once and currently sit in the best position behind Wales.

To keep up to date with the latest events at the Sainsbury's School Games make sure you follow all the updates on twitter [@ettatabletennis](https://twitter.com/ettatabletennis) or, alternatively, if you want to watch the livestream of table four, that is also available at the link on the [ETTA homepage](#).

Semi-Finals:

England South East Boys v England North East Boys

England Midlands Boys v Wales Boys

England South East Girls v England Midlands Girls

England South West Girls v Northern Ireland Girls

Disability Team standings:

Wales 8pts

England Midlands 7pts

England South East 6pts

England South West 6pts

England North East 6pts

England North West 6pts

Northern Ireland 5pts

Scotland 4pts

Written by Russell Moore (September 13, 2013)

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