

Amy and Michael are Gloucester Champions

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Amy and Michael are Gloucester Champions!



Amy Blagbrough (Ha) with her dual titles

Amy Blagbrough from Basingstoke and Michael Bree from Tamworth were the winners of the Gloucester Two Star Open Junior Tournament on an action-packed day held at the Deer Park Table Tennis Centre in Cirencester on November 10th.

With eight separate events played on ten tables Tournament Organiser Ken Bridle and Referee Gill Smith aided by a band of hard working volunteers managed to keep seventy four eager competitors very busy all day long.

Following the loss of the Cotswolds Junior 4 star event two years ago the Gloucester Table Tennis Association were eager to continue the great work that had been done over countless years in the past by the providing once again a theatre of opportunity where young pretenders can showcase their immense table tennis talents.

Thirteen-year-old Amy Blagbrough was 'The Shining Star' of the day by taking both the Under-15 and Under-18 Girls' titles.

She is the latest in a long line of top players to roll off the Rowden Fullen 'production line' at Bournemouth Sports Club and in punching well above her years was in brilliant form to win her two trophies.

In the Girls under 18 round-robin of seven players she finished in joint top position with Stephanie Cross. Only Beth Atkinson could manage to lower Amy's colours all day in a very close full-distance five game match.

By virtue of the fact that Amy outplayed Stephanie 3-0 in their last match group encounter, the young lady from Basingstoke took the Under 18's title to add to the Under 15's trophy she had won earlier in the day by also defeating Stephanie Cross from Essex in the final clash – this time in a topsy-turvy five game final thriller.

Following ten hours of ultra competitive play the very last match to finish at 7.20pm was the Under 18's Boys' final contested by Michael Bree and Finn Morgan-Bayliss from Dorset.



Finn Morgan-Bayliss (Do) and Michael Bree (St) after their epic contest

For the few of us that stayed to the bitter end we were treated to an incredible final by two boxer-like heavyweight fighters slugging it out in a never-give-up belter that went the very full distance.

I can honestly say in all my years of watching matches – this one was simply most unusual and incredible in the way and spirit it was played with full credit to these battle-weary players.

Bree was the one to take the early initiative in attack but Morgan-Bayliss' style of 'back from the table fishing' seemed in his comfort zone and was paying off. Finn took the first two sets 11-8 and 18-16 by reeling in his opponent with the landing net ready in his hand!

But as we all know its not over until its over with the prize catch in close to his hands. However, in a remarkable and determined fashion, Michael never stopped fighting to get back into the final by taking the next two games to level.

The fifth and final game had more excitement than an episode of Robson Green's Extreme Angling with attack then fishing then counter attack more fishing and incredible tight lines! Rallies that seemed to go on and on.

The entire battle reminded me of the time I landed my biggest ever Carp of 22 pounds, a fight I will never forget that went on for 20 minutes! Somehow and from somewhere Bree managed to get off the hook and over the winning line by a very tight margin winning 11-9! What a fantastic match! Take a bow – boys!

Bree's pathway to the final was at the expense of Joshua Millman, and Ben Bennet in the knockout rounds whilst Morgan-Bayliss displaced Sam Weaving and an impressive hard-fought semi-final victory over 13-year-old Peter Trans from the Hillerods Club in Copenhagen.

I was most impressed by the two young players who fought out the final of the Under 13's Boys event.



James Smith (K) and Daniel Simonsen (DEN)

English No. 1, 12-year-old James Smith from Essex was in awesome form to take the title with victories against Cade Short, Reece Chamdal and then his final opponent Daniel Simonsen from Denmark.

Simonsen a ten-year-old diminutive blond-haired Viking also from The Hillerods Club near to Copenhagen was on an exchange visit from the Parkstone Club in Poole and is also a future superstar. In reaching the final he was clever in his shotmaking skills with so many tricks up his sleeve for one so young to brush aside second seeded Jamie Liu in his group then following up with wins over Jordan Pang (Hugo's younger brother) and then semi-finalist Harry Nicholls. However, the older English player James Smith had just too much experience for the Dane to run out a comfortable champion.



Katie Holt (Ha) and Jemma Walker (Bu)

Katie Holt from Hampshire was in devastating form to win the Under 13 Girls event winning all her six round robin matches following her earlier disappointment in the semi-final of the Under 15's event losing out narrowly to Stephanie Cross who had a good day at the office with two runner-up trophies. Jemma Walker from Buckinghamshire was a gallant runner-up winning five of her six matches

Ben Cawston a Hampshire-based player from the Waterside Club in Southampton won the Under-15 Boys' event following a very spirited all-action performance from losing finalist Edward Haskell from Devon.



Winner Ben Cawston (Ha) with runner-up Ed Haskell (Dv)

Cawston had to eliminate quality players, the likes of Alex Tomlinson, Peter Trans and then a marathon five game semi-final over top seeded James Smith (that was worthy of any final) to take his well deserved trophy.

Haskell, meanwhile was the 'Cream of Devon' in disposing of Max Aldous, then third seed Matthew Daish to reach his rightful place in the final.

Berkshire's pocket rocket Jamie Liu took the Under 11's Boys event in the final against another great prospect in Jordan Pang from the Bournemouth Sports Club.



Jamie Liu (Bk) and Jordan Pang (Do)

Matthew Daish enjoyed a run of great performances to take the Under 18 Boys Consolation tournament against Joshua Millman in a straight games final.

Results:

Under 18 Boys

Michael Bree (St) bt Finn Morgan-Bayliss (Do) 3-2 (8-11, 16-18, 11-7, 12-10, 11-9)

Under 18 Girls

Round Robin Winner – Amy Blagbrough (Ha)

Under 15 Boys

Ben Cawston (Ha) bt James Smith (E) 3-1 (11-8, 7-11, 11-6, 11-7)

Under 15 Girls

Amy Blagbrough (Ha) bt Stephanie Cross (E) 3-2 (5-11, 11-9, 6-11, 12-10, 11-6)

Boys Under 13

James Smith (E) bt Daniel Simonsen (DEN) 3-0 (11-4, 11-8, 11-8)

Girls Under 13

Round Robin Winner – Katie Holt (Ha)

Boys Under 11

Jamie Liu (Bk) bt Jordan Pang (Do) 3-0 (11-4, 11-5, 11-9)

Boys Under 18 Consolation

Matthew Daish (Ha) bt Joshua Millman (Dv) 3-0 (11-4, 11-7, 11-9)

Written by Geoff Ware (November 11, 2013)

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