

Tsaptsinos shocks Tin-Tin for National Junior title

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Posted On: **November 23, 2013**



Maria Tsaptsinos en route to the title (picture courtesy of Trevor Parsons)

Junior Girls Singles

Maria Tsaptsinos won her maiden National Junior Girls' Singles title after stunning top seed Tin-Tin Ho in a brilliant encounter between the old rivals at the Sir Tom Finney Sports Centre, UCLAN, Preston.

The international duo were strong favourites for the title and ensured themselves of another key head-to-head when they emerged from their respective knockout matches without dropping an end. Tsaptsinos defeating Stephanie Cross and Emily Bolton in straight games before Emma Torkington withdrew during their semi-final while Tin-Tin wasted no time in beating Bethany Farnworth, Letitia McMullan and Lois Peake.

That gave the pair their long-awaited match-off, something that was missed at the Sainsbury's School Games in September when Tin-Tin's shock defeat to Yuki Wat meant that Tsaptsinos faced the Sussex-based youngster rather than the current junior no. 1.

The final started in the fashion that all of the audience expected with an intensive battle for the early lead in the first game. The second seed started positively and established a 9-5 break, but Tin-Tin managed to earn four consecutive points to level at 9-9. The energetic Tsaptsinos then created the first game point of the set but it wasn't until she had both spurned two and saved two game points that she finally took a 1-0 lead with a 15-13 game.

That could've given the Berkshire teenager the early impetus in this important meeting but, with an dominant show of power, the top seed levelled in style. An 8-1 lead in the second game quickly became an 11-4 set as Tin-Tin didn't allow Tsaptsinos any time to settle.

It looked as though the tide had turned early in the third end but crucially, at 7-6 down, Tsaptsinos delivered her most decisive move by showing she was up to the battle. She won four straight points to lead 10-7, slipping briefly to 10-10, but importantly holding on to secure a 2-1 lead with a 12-10 game.

The reigning Sainsbury's School Games Champion then dominated the fourth game, something she has not done against her great rival in a long time, to cruise home 11-4 and seal a memorable achievement at the Sir Tom Finney Sports Centre.

Junior Boys Singles

Helshan Weerasinghe made it third time lucky by finally securing his maiden Junior Boys Singles title following a 3-0 victory over Igor Morais in the youngster's third consecutive junior boys' singles final.

Weerasinghe had previously been a losing finalist in both 2011 and 2012 to Sam Walker, but this year the number 1 seed was not to be denied as the top seed marched towards the trophy.

He was confident throughout the tournament and, when the crucial points arose, he was always able to raise his game to meet the challenge. In his first knockout rounds he waltzed past Daniel Wright and Joseph Langham-Ferreira before beating both Marcus Giles and Sam Mabey in four to make the final.

At the last hurdle he met Morais, who actually faced his toughest battle against Alec Ward earlier on. Ward, one of the favourites for the Cadet Boys Singles tomorrow, pushed the Greenhouse player all the way in a 3-2 (11-6, 4-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-6) last 16 defeat. This result came in during a stunning period of matches with the last 16 clashes creating several quality five set encounters including Sam Mabey beating Luke Walsh 3-2 (11-6, 7-11, 6-11, 11-7, 11-5), Jared Patel defeating Luke Savill 3-2 (3-11, 11-9, 11-5, 8-11, 11-8) and Gabriel Achampong beating Daniel Lawrence in a high-octane 3-2 (9-11, 1-11, 11-9, 11-5, 13-11) result.

When Morais and Weerasinghe met in the final it was a real topsy-turvy affair with the first two games dominated by large turnarounds in the score. Weerasinghe, from 8-4 up in the first was pegged back to 9-8 before ultimately taking it 11-8, before Morais from 6-0 up in the second was himself hauled in by Weerasinghe who established a 2-0 lead with an 11-9 game.

It was at this stage in 2012 that Sam Walker staged his comeback to beat the Sussex player from a 2-0 deficit but this time the no.1 ranked junior made no mistake and confidently sealed the 3-0 win to secure his overdue accolade.

Junior Boys Doubles

Danny Lawrence defended his Junior Boys Doubles title with new partner Adam Harrison, who also won his maiden national championship in an epic 3-2 victory over top seeds Helshan Weerasinghe and Sam Mabey.

Lawrence and Harrison's campaign took a pivotal turn in their quarter-final clash with London pair Gabriel Achampong and Omar Khassal where they survived a late comeback to set themselves on the path to glory. The pair, from Kent and Lincolnshire respectively, had taken a confident 2-0 lead (11-6, 11-4) but were pegged back to 2-2 by the plucky pair from the capital.

However, Lawrence and Harrison kicked ahead with a comfortable 11-4 game, allowing the duo to set their sights on the title and a semi-final appearance against Igor Morais and Marcus Giles. Their result against Morais and Giles was a comparatively straightforward 3-0 win – a sweet result for Lawrence who had previously partnered Morais to the title in 2012.

When they met the favourites Weerasinghe and Mabey in the final it produced a classic clash which went through five entertaining ends. The top seeds started well with a tight 13-11 game and it appeared as though they had done the hard work when they won another tight game in the third end 12-10 to lead 2-1. But, buoyed by their new-found partnership, Lawrence and Harrison levelled 11-9 to take the championship to a one-game shootout.

Not an ideal time, therefore, for Mabey to be affected by a nosebleed. How much effect it had could only be guessed at as the junior star still contributed to some excellent rallies but he was to end up on the losing side with Lawrence and Harrison just holding onto their trophy with a tense 11-9 final game.

Junior Girls Doubles

Lois Peake and Letitia McMullan nearly pulled off the shock of the weekend in the Junior Girls Doubles when they led hot favourites Tin-Tin Ho and Maria Tsaptsinos 2-0 before the Junior Girls Singles finalists recovered to retain their title from 2012.

Apart from their battle in the final, Tin-Tin and Tsaptsinos had remained relatively unchallenged on their merry route to another domestic gong. In sweeping aside Amy Blagbrough/Christelle Brook, Ella Patel/Kayleigh Forster and Emily Bolton/Amy Humphreys they barely broke a sweat, sealing each match in double quick time with successive 3-0 wins.

However, the massive underdogs, who had actually received two walkovers in their campaign, were the first to provide the favourites with a serious test when they took a surprise 2-0 (11-9, 11-3) lead in the gold medal match. Unfortunately for the duo, they were unable to maintain their form as Tin-Tin and Tsaptsinos found their game and cruised home in the final three games, dropping just 14 points in the process.

Written by Russell Moore

Junior Mixed Doubles

Defending champions Tin-Tin Ho and Helshan Weerasinghe came up against the only team to test them in the finals, last year's runner-up Igor Morais, who breezed through his quarter and semi-finals with new partner, Maria Tsaptsinos.

Having cleared the path to the finals with a win in the semi-finals against Lois Peake and Jack Bennett 3-0 (11-3, 11-3, 11,1) it seemed like there would be no-one to challenge the top seeds in their attempts to retain the title.

Morais and Tsaptsinos experienced a tougher route to the semi-finals but looked in dominant form after taking apart Jack Dempsey and Emily Bolton in the quarter-finals 3-0 (11-5, 11-7, 11-3).

During their semi-final match against Luke Savill and Leitia McMullan, Maria took a nasty fall on her knee, attempting a 'hail-mary' dive for a wide forehand, with close at one set all and 12-10 to Savill and McMullan anything could happen.

Following Maria's fall she showed tremendous perseverance and stamina and played some excellent points to level the score at two apiece, in the final set all looked level with both teams leaving everything on the table, but, after a fantastic performance and tight run game Igor and Maria sealed in the win with a five end victory over Savill and McMullan 3-2 (11-6, 7-11, 10-12, 11-9, 13-11)

In the final showdown defending champions Tin-Tin and Helshan faced second seeds Igor Morais and Maria Tsaptsinos in the last chance for anyone to break the cool composure of the champions and challenge them for the title.

Taking a convincing lead (7-1) in the first set it looked as though it would be a one-sided encounter, however, the underdogs managed to close the final score in the first set to 11-5.

Igor and Maria took a lead in the second set going 6-0 up but at the score of 10-10 the pressure built up sufficiently and a series of action-packed rallies took the top seeds to their second set win 12-10.

The third set remained close going to 7-7 after daring rallies that took both partners away from the court at all angles, however, the defending champions wouldn't be denied, taking the third set 11-7 to complete the job and retain their mixed doubles crown.

Written by David Lambert

[Watch all of yesterdays action from Table 2 including the Junior Boys Singles final and Junior Boys and Girls Doubles finals.](#)

[English Cadet and Junior National Championships Results](#)

Junior Boys Singles:

Helshan Weerasinghe bt Igor Morais 3-0 (11-8, 11-9, 11-7)

Junior Girls Singles:

Maria Tsaptsinos bt Tin-Tin Ho 3-1 (15-13, 4-11, 12-10, 11-6)

Junior Boys Doubles:

Daniel Lawrence/Adam Harrison bt Helshan Weerasinghe/Sam Mabey 3-2 (11-13, 11-7, 10-12, 11-9, 11-9)

Junior Girls Doubles:

Tin-Tin Ho/Maria Tsaptsinos bt Letitia McMullan/Lois Peake 3-2 (9-11, 3-11, 11-4, 11-4, 11-6)

Junior Mixed Doubles:

Helshan Weerasinghe/Tin-Tin Ho bt Igor Morais/Maria Tsaptsinos 3-0 (11-5, 12-10, 11-7)

You can watch more of the live action from the Cadet and Junior National Championships on Sunday [here](#).

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