

Local hopes rise to the challenge at Plymouth 1*

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Gemma Kerr celebrates her first tournament win with Cornish TTA Rep Jeremy Williams

On Sunday 15th December the Bribar Plymouth Junior 1 star table tennis tournament took place at the brand new English Table Tennis Association and Eggbuckland Community College funded, purpose built table tennis facility at the college.

This gave local junior players the opportunity to compete against other juniors from across the country to gain valuable experience and valuable England ranking points.

The event was extremely well supported with some very experienced players entering the tournament with high expectations.

The entry included players as young as 8 years old competing in a tournament for the very first time. The event was divided into four age groups split between boys and girls in under 11,13,15 and 18 age groups.

The most notable success from Plymouth based players were at girls under 11 level with Gemma Kerr beating her close friend and training partner Holly Smithson in the final.

Cornishman Harry Nicholls continued his excellent form winning the Under 13 boys event from Ben Edmunds.

The under 13 girls event was played in a large group format, with Okehamptons Emily Haskell proving too strong for the opposition and winning all her matches and the title, however special mention should go to 9 year old Holly Smithson from Plymouth winning many matches against much older opposition.

The boys under 15 age groups saw Josh Millman upset the seeding by beating higher ranked Carl Baldry in the boys final and Dominique Williams from Falmouth taking the girls title beating Brixhams' Holly Johns in the girls under 15 final.

The most eagerly awaited event was the under 18 boys and girls competitions which also proved to be the strongest events, with Carl Baldry and Torbay's Jaz Johns both seeded number 1 with strong challengers from a group containing Saltash's England ranked number 22 girl, Beth Wilson, Jordan Bone, George Haskell, Aaron and Josh Millman along with Cornish twins Alex and James Wright.

They both endured tough matches with Beth Wilson challenging Jaz all the way in a high quality final, but finally England Number girl 9 Jazmin Johns took the girls under 18 title.

Carl Baldry fought his way through to the final by beating Plymouth's Jordan Bone in the semi final. In the other semi final Alex Wright over his brother James setting up an all Cornwall final.

In a high quality final Alex Wright initially proved too strong for Carl Baldry and found himself 2 sets to 1 up and 10-5 up in the fourth set however an inspired Baldry saved 5 match points and went on to win that set.

Alex Wright was shell shocked and just could not maintain his form. From that moment on the momentum was with Carl Baldry, now in his ascendance he came back into the match and took the title in the 5th set.

Falmouth's Dylan Tynan also won his first ever open tournament title in winning the boys under 11 event at the Briar Plymouth Junior 1 star defeating Tom Mercer from Brixham in a hottly contested event final. This I am sure will be the first of many future titles won by this young future star.

All the competitors, parents and coaches displayed great sportsmanship throughout the tournament which ensured the smooth running and this was endorsed by the ETTA referee Shawn Haskell.

The new table tennis facility at Eggbuckland Community College continues to now set high standards for major table tennis tournaments in the the country. With the new facility at Eggbuckland College now becoming one of only four table tennis talent development centres in the country, it will be offering more young players with an opportunity to play and be coached at a top class facility.

If anybody would like more information on local coaching or playing opportunities please do not hesitate to contact the English Table Tennis Association's Talent Development Centre coach Paul Whiting on 07814 390997 or email pwhiting@etta.co.uk

Kevin Buddell (December 18, 2013)

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