

Landmark 50th win for Jenkins could signal the end

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Men's Singles:

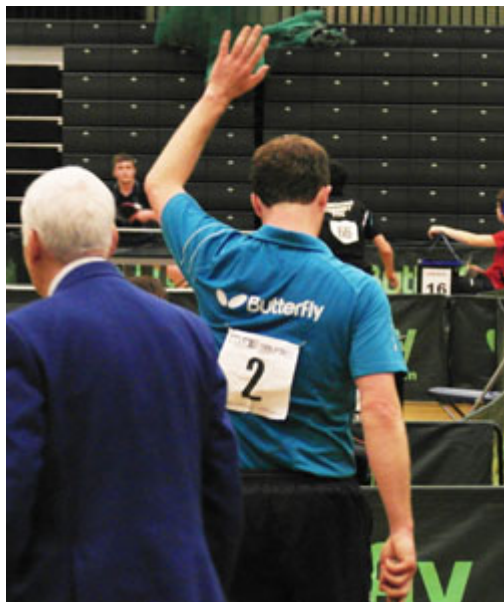
Grand Prix King Ryan Jenkins vowed to bow out of competitive table tennis following his 50th Men's Singles title at the Tees Sport Blackpool Grand Prix.

The Welshman, who has dominated the British domestic game throughout the start of the 21st century, spoke to Matt Shaw earlier in the season and revealed his intentions.

The 11-time Welsh National Champion said: "I was asked how many Grand Prix I had won and I didn't know the answer. I got hold of the records and I worked out that I've won 46. I just thought about it and I've decided getting to fifty would be a good way to go out.

"I'm determined to go out on a high. I don't want to be one of those players that stay around too long. It's a goal for me to finish top of the British rankings and then have a break – It will be nice to come for a weekend away and not have to worry about my condition on a Sunday."

Following his 3-0 victory in the final over Chris Doran, Jenkins subtly confirmed his previous intentions: "Yes I think that is it. Sometimes you've got to draw the line."



In a stereotypical performance, Jenkins was the epitome of professionalism and clinical dynamism, dropping just one end throughout his final playing Grand Prix appearance.

The Welshman, who will miss the season closer at the Briar London GP due to the World Championships, won his group comfortably before beating Andrew MacPherson (3-0), Igor Morais (3-0), Richard Main (3-0) and Craig Howieson (3-1) to set up a final with reigning overall Men's Singles Champion, Chris Doran.

Doran, who had been impressive in wins over Mike O'Driscoll and Sean Doherty was no match for the Welshman who gave the touch player no breaks in a decidedly one-sided final.

Although it appears as though the victory will be Jenkins' last Grand Prix appearance, he did reveal he may yet extend his career with a trip into the veterans' game.

He said: "It would be something new. I would like to play in the Veterans when I get to that age, it's a new challenge and a bit more laid back, there's a while until I can play in that just yet though!"

Long-time Grand Prix rival Gavin Rumgay tweeted his appreciation of Jenkins' career: "Excellent stuff Ryan. You have been the most consistent performer for 15 years in ETTA Grand Prix! All the best for the future!"



Women's Singles:

Karina Le Fevre overcame some early nerves and a tricky semi-final to win the Women's Singles at the Tees Sport Blackpool Grand Prix and boost her hopes of retaining the overall season title.

The girl from Cleveland had a shock defeat in the group stages to England junior Emily Bolton 3-1 (7-11, 17-15, 11-9, 11-1) but recovered sufficiently to top the table and earn her spot as the number one seed for the knockout draw.

In the semi-finals she met Sophie Neil, who had finished up as a runner-up in group 3 to Corinna Whitaker following a 3-2 (11-9, 11-7, 10-12, 6-11, 11-6) loss, however, she too bounced back to beat Zoe Cheesman 3-0 (11-2, 11-6, 11-7) in the quarter-final.

Their meeting was a real test for Le Fevre who fell 2-1 behind to Neil's aggressive play. Not to be denied her place in the final though, the pre-tournament favourite won the next two games 11-8 and 11-6 to seal a spot in the final.

On the other side of the draw, Whitaker, following her previous 3-2 win held her nerve in another full-distance match, this time winning 3-2 (10-12, 11-9, 11-7, 7-11, 11-9) against Tees Sport Player of the Weekend, Lynda Flaws.

However, Whitaker couldn't raise her level for a third time against fellow Scot Gillian Edwards, who backed up her Band 1 win from Saturday with a place in the Women's Singles Final following a 3-1 (11-5, 8-11, 11-6, 12-10) victory.

When the English and Scottish girls met in the final it was a combative clash of attacking styles but with Le Fevre holding the key with quick reactions and good positional play on the table.

In the end the 3-0 result was an anti-climax but gave Le Fevre more crucial points towards retaining the overall Women's Singles title she won in 2012/13.



Men's Under-21s:

Colin Dalgleish won a fantastic Men's Under-21s Final against Igor Morais to pick up the Tees Sport Blackpool Grand Prix crown late on Sunday evening.

The Scot, who was seeded second behind the Greenhouse protégé, won his group comfortably before stepping up his form during the knockout rounds to race past Oviwge Eyarhono, Jac Jenkins and Jack Dempsey, all by a 3-0 scoreline.

Morais, who also won his group, endured four five-end matches during his campaign, which included a tight 3-2 group victory over Jenkins.

The Middlesex player then beat Joe Pilkington 3-2 (11-8, 11-7, 3-11, 11-13, 11-3) in the quarter-final and Michael Fraser 3-2 (11-9, 11-4, 8-11, 5-11, 11-4) in the semi-final before falling short to Dalgleish 3-2 (11-5, 9-11, 9-11, 11-5, 11-9) in a final full of superb rallies – highlighted by the Scots precision backhands from deep in the court.



Women's Under-21s:

Sophie Neil beat Emily Bolton in a titanic Women's Under-21 Final at the Blackpool Sports Centre to earn the last title on offer on Sunday evening.

There were just two women's under-21 groups but both Neil and Bolton were focused enough to comprehensively win through all their matches and remain unbeaten heading into the semi-finals.

Neither player wasted any energy in reaching the final as top seed Neil beat Beth Farnworth 3-0 (11-8, 11-7, 11-7) and second seed Bolton beat Kate Roberts 3-0 (11-4, 11-6, 11-8).

Instead they expended all of their resources in a magnificent match, suitable for closing any tournament out as the duo matched each other blow for blow over five grueling ends.

In truth there was little to choose between them but, despite saving two match points, Bolton could not prevent Neil converting a third to seal the championship 3-2 (16-14, 10-12, 14-12, 6-11, 12-10).



Veterans:

Hon Kau Choy dropped just one end at the Tees Sport Blackpool Grand Prix as he rampaged to the Veterans' Singles title on Sunday.

The Nottinghamshire player gave up his only end in the group stages when he beat John Malone 3-1 (9-11, 11-5, 11-7, 11-4) – the same player he would later meet in the final.

While Choy won the group and easily defeated Peter Wilkinson 3-0 (11-8, 11-8, 11-7) in the semi-finals, Malone bounced back from his early loss to progress from group 2 as runner up and then beat Alan Cherry 3-1 (11-8, 11-7, 5-11, 11-6) to set up a re-match.

However, just like the first meeting, Choy was too good for his Lincolnshire opponent and won in three rapid ends to secure the main prize.



Open Doubles:

Mike O'Driscoll extended his excellent season in the Open Doubles by partnering Niall Cameron to victory at the Tees Sport Blackpool Grand Prix.

The veteran once again utilised his left-handed style to great effect by winning group two with his Scottish partner before dropping just one game in the knockout rounds to claim another 2013/14 title.

O'Driscoll and Cameron saw off Corinna Whitaker/Lynda Flaws 3-0 (11-5, 11-7, 11-8) in the quarter-finals before looking equally impressive against another all-Scottish pair; Chris Wheeler and Calum Main in the semis 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-6).

In the final they met Craig Howieson and Sean Doherty who had earlier beaten Mark Heptonstall/Nick Ryder 3-0 and Chris Main/Richard Main 3-1 but were not able to overcome the final hurdle as O'Driscoll and Cameron picked up another success on Sunday afternoon.

Sudden Death:

The Sudden Death competition at the Tees Sport Blackpool Grand Prix produced another first-time winner as Alex Ramsden won a youthful-looking final with Callum Evans.

The £2 entry fee meant a tasty prize pot of £64 was on offer (£50 to the winner, £14 runner-up) and there was plenty of competition along the way.

Ramsden secured his prize with victories over Damian Galka, Chris Wheeler, Martin Perry, Mike Marsden and finally Evans, while the Welshman had fought off Joe Howard, Corinna Whitaker, Martin Rutter and Kelsey Le Maistre to make the final hurdle.

Tees Sport Blackpool Grand Prix Results

Men's Singles:

Ryan Jenkins bt Chris Doran 3-0 (11-4, 11-1, 11-8)

Women's Singles:

Karina Le Fevre bt Gillian Edwards 3-0 (11-5, 11-7, 11-8)

Men's Under-21s:

Colin Dalglish bt Igor Morais 3-2 (11-5, 9-11, 9-11, 11-5, 11-9)

Women's Under-21s:

Sophie Neil bt Emily Bolton 3-2 (16-14, 10-12, 14-12, 6-11, 12-10)

Veterans:

Hon Kau Choy bt John Malone 3-0 (11-3, 11-4, 11-5)

Open Doubles:

Mike O'Driscoll/Niall Cameron bt Craig Howieson/Sean Doherty 3-1 (6-11, 11-9, 11-1, 11-8)

Sudden Death:

Alex Ramsden beat Callum Evans

By Russell Moore (April 6, 2014)

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