

ISF World Schools' Championships

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Girls blaze a trail at championships in Clermont-Ferrand



The Girls' National Team (right) line up against France

Day One

After an opening ceremony featuring jugglers, gymnasts, unicyclists, stilt walkers and dancers from local schools, session 1 began with all four England teams in action.

Team of the day was the Girls' National Team of Tin-Tin Ho, Emma Torkington, Maria Tsaptsinos and Yuki Wat, who began their campaign with two excellent victories.

They first met host nation France and after an exciting match came away with a 4-3 victory. Tin-Tin led the way with wins against Sannah Lagsir and Emillie Jaffeux. Emma defeated Eloise Saint Dizier and Tin-Tin and Yuki sealed the victory with a doubles win against Emillie and Eloise. Maria battled all the way, losing to Emillie and then going down in the fifth against Eloise.

England then easily overcame Turkey, with Tin-Tin defeating Inci Dursun in three and Damla Uzel in five, Yuki beating Damla in five and Aysegul Demirtas in three. Emma won in five against Aysegul and lost in four to Inci, while Tin-Tin and Maria had a good doubles win against Inci and Sinem Aslan to secure an excellent 6-1 victory.



The Boys' National Team (left) before their match with Turkey

The Boys' National Team of Marcus Giles, Tom Jarvis, Danny Lawrence and Helshan Weerasinghe got off to a good start in their only match of the day against Turkey, with an excellent 6-1 victory. Helshan defeated Yigenler Abdullah Talha 3-1 and Ulucak Batuhan in three. Danny beat Ulucak and Sahin Zihni Batuhan both in four, with Marcus losing in five to Sahin and defeating Yigenler in four. Tom and Helshan completed the victory with a 3-0 win against Yigenler and Sahin.

In the School Team section, the girls of Northfield School and the boys from London Academy both had matches in the first two sessions and, although putting up spirited performances, were unable to secure a victory.

In session one, the Northfield team of Katie Barlow, Hannah Clark, Eleanor Davidson and Amy Webster lost 5-2 to Turkey. Katie and Hannah notched the wins, both defeating Dilem Akyuz three straight.

In session two, they came up against the strongly fancied Chinese team and although putting up a brave fight, lost 7-0, going down three straight in all matches.

In the Boys' School Team section, the London Academy team of Gabriel Achampong, Charlie Austen, Karim Khassal and Omar Khassal, started with a match against Turkey and after a brave fight finally went down 6-1. Omar lost the first game 3-0 against Ozgun Ozturk, before Gabriel levelled at 1-1 with a win against Ziver Gunduz in five. After that, the match went away from them, with Gabriel losing his second match in five and Omar and Karim losing in four to Ibrahim Gunduz and Ziver.

In session two, they also came up against China and, just like the girls of Northfield, lost 7-0 to the pre-tournament favourites. Charlie was the only player to take a set when losing 3-1 to Wu Di.

Day two



London Academy (right) line up with their Turkish opponents

London Academy registered their first win in the competition when defeating Ireland 7-0. Gabriel Achampong defeated Charlie Fitzgerald and Geoffrey O'Connor both in four sets. Omar Khassal beat Geoffrey in five and Andrew Campbell in four, whilst Karim Khassal registered two wins when defeating Andrew and Charlie both in four sets. The doubles sealed a brilliant 7-0 success to cheer up the squad after yesterday's two losses, with Charlie Austen and Karim defeating Charlie and Geoffrey 11-9 in the fifth.

In the day's second session, London Academy had their best win so far when defeating a very strong Luxembourg team 4-3. Gabriel defeated Luka Mladenovic in four and followed up with a 3-0 win against Louis Van Wambeke. Karim defeated Louis in four before losing to Ademir Balaban three straight. Omar then beat Ademir 3-0 before going down 11-9 in the fourth against Luka. Gabriel and Omar then teamed up in the doubles, narrowly going down 11-8 in the fifth against Luka and Louis.

London Academy then came up against the Czech Republic team that contained David Reitspies, the current European No 1. Charlie had to face David in the first game and not unexpectedly went down 3-0. Things did not improve later as the Czech Republic took all the singles and David and Martin Vitovec narrowly took the doubles 11-9 in the fifth against Charlie and Karim, for them to run out 7-0 victors.



Northfield School (right) with their Turkish opponents

In the Girls' School section, Northfield found the going very tough but gave their all before losing 7-0 to Luxembourg, France and Bulgaria. The girls are hoping that their fortunes change tomorrow when competing in the 9-12 positions play offs.

The Boys' National team started in great heart after their excellent opening victory and had an exciting match against one of the tournament favourites when coming face to face with Chinese Taipei. Tom Jarvis lost the first game three straight against Tzu-Yi Yang, but Danny Lawrence levelled the match, defeating Huang-Yang Chi 11-9 in the fifth. Marcus Giles then lost in the fourth to Pai-Chun Kuo, before Danny and Helshan Weerasinghe levelled again at 2-2 when winning the doubles 11-8 in the fifth. Tzu-Yi then defeated Danny 3-0 to put Taipei 3-2 in front and although Tom tried his best to keep England in the match, he went down in three to Pai-Chun. With the match lost Marcus then produced an outstanding performance in the final game when defeating Huang-Yang 11-7 in the fifth.

The boys got back on track with an excellent 5-2 victory against Greece. Helshan had two 3-0 wins against Tsopeles Andreas and Siapkaras Petros, Danny beat Siapkaras in four and then lost to Angelakis Konstantinos in four. Tom lost in four to Angelakis before defeating Tsopeles 11-8, also in the fourth. In an exciting doubles match Danny and Helshan came through 12-10 in the fifth against Angelakis and Siapkaras to end the match 5-2 victors.

The Girls' National team were attempting to continue their good run from day one, when taking on Chinese Taipei. However, despite a battling performance the girls went down 6-1 losing all the singles games, while Emma Torkington and Maria Tsaptsinos saved the whitewash when taking an exciting doubles 14-12 in the four.

In session five the girls came up against Bulgaria in a match that could put them in the play-offs for places 1-4. Tin-Tin Ho took the first 3-0 against Nadezhda Sarieva, before Maria Yovkova levelled at 1-1, defeating Maria Tsaptsinos 12-10 in the fourth. Krasimira Yovkova then beat Emma 3 straight before a fantastic doubles that saw Tin-Tin and Maria come from two sets and 8-3 down in the fifth to finally take the game 13-11 against the Yovkova sisters. This seemed to take the heart out of the Bulgarian team as Tin-Tin beat Maria three straight and Emma beat Nadezhda by the same margin. In the final game Maria defeated Krasimira 3-2 (12-10, 6-11, 12-10, 6-11, 11-9) as England closed the match out at 5-2.

The team event finishes today and, after a day's break, the individual tournament takes place on Wednesday.

By John Blackband

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