

Scott scoops first Brighton men's singles title

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Handicap singles champion Rory Scott (right)

Rory Scott added his first Brighton League Championships men's singles title to his third handicap singles crown as the event was held at Hollingbury TTC.

The first event was the **handicap singles**, which had five groups of three players. In Group 1 all three players (Scott, Jonathan Theodoridi and John Ledward) won a match each and Scott progressed on countback by virtue of a superior games difference. Theodoridi, who had beaten Scott 3-2 with a +6/-5 head start up to 11 points, went through as group runner-up.

In the quarter-finals, Scott beat Jan Collado (who had a one point head start) in the fifth set, Ollie Guile beat Tony Seaman (who again had a one point head start) 3-0, Tony Wicks (with a six point head start) beat Daniel Prakash 3-0 and finally Theodoridi (with a two point head start) beat Danny Burns 3-1.

In the semis Scott ended Guile's run in a close four-setter (the starts were +6/-6 in favour of Guile) and Theodoridi beat Wicks 3-0 in a scratch game. So Theodoridi and Scott met again in the final, but this time Scott overturned the earlier result in a very close match, despite losing the first two games (9-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-9) to take his third handicap singles title since 2001.

Handicap Doubles



The handicap doubles finalists

There were many close matches in the handicap doubles event, which featured eight pairs. The semi-final line-up was Chris Pullinger and Jan Austera (who had beaten Scott and Oliver Davis 14-12 in the fifth) versus Danny Burns and Minesh Agnihotri (who had knocked out Theodoridi and Tony Seaman in the fifth and then Jan Collado and Simon Knivett versus Lee Weigelt and Tony Wicks. Pullinger and Austera (with a +3 head start) lost to Burns and Agnihotri 12-10 in the fifth. Collado and Knivett beat Weigelt and Wicks 3-1 in a scratch game. In the final Collado and Knivett won 12-10, 11-9, 14-12 against Agnihotri & Burns, who had a +4 head start.

Men's Singles



Rory Scott (right) receives the men's singles trophy

The men's singles was the biggest event by far, with 30 entrants in 10 groups of three. There had to be a new champion this year, as there were no previous champions in the draw. Other than the fact that Peter Bartram and Andy Walker were not playing, the draw looked pretty strong and more open than usual.

Tim Holtam, the No 1 seed, made his way to the final with wins over Daniel Prakash, Chris Pullinger, and Daniel Li, just dropping one game to Li.

Li from Division 1, who had been runner-up in his group to team-mate Junli Loo, caused two big upsets, first coming back from 1-2 down to beat Tony Rowell in the last 16 (Rowell had beaten eventual semi-finalist and No 4 seed, Dave Steel in the group) and then hammering No 5 seed, Jan Collado 3-0. Pullinger had had a couple of good wins himself, having beaten No 8 seed, Faldie Adams in the group and then a good 3-0 win over Shalim Ahmed.

On the other side of the draw, second seed Scott made his way to the final with wins over Simon Knivett (who had a good group win over Dave Pringuer) 3-1, No 7 seed Ben Cooper 3-1 and Steel 3-0 in the semi-final.

The last 16 matches on this side of the draw provided two upsets. The bigger of the two was Division 1 player Loo, knocking out-of-form sixth seed Mark Collins, the recent semi-finalist in the men's singles in the Crawley & Horsham Championships. The other mini-upset was Steel defeating third seed, Prakash Varsani 11-9, 11-9, 8-11, 11-9. This meant that Steel and Loo met in the quarters and it was the former, who emerged victorious 3-1.

So to the final. The players were both a bit tentative, with neither ever having made it to the final before. The first game was crucial and it was close all the way. Scott managed to take his third game point to win 14-12. In the second game Scott got off to a flying start to lead 8-1, with some errors from Holtam and a couple of good ones from Scott. However, Holtam calmed himself and got it back level, only to lose the second game 11-9. The third game was again close, with Scott leading most of the time, until Holtam clinched it 11-9.

The fourth was another close game and at match point a Holtam error gifted the championship to a relieved Scott, who had now won three local league titles this season (the others were Eastbourne and Redhill/Reigate) and nine in total.

Men's Consolation Singles



Consolation singles finalists Viral Varsani and Ernest Omane-Kodie

The 10 third-placed players from the men's singles groups went into the consolation singles. Theodoridi of Division 2, got a great close straight sets win over Ollie Davis, of Division 1 in the quarters, but lost 3-0 to Viral Varsani in the semis. In the other half youngster Ollie Guile of Division 2 had a 3-0 win over Ray Algar of Division 1 and then lost 3-0 to Ernest Omane-Kodie in the semi. Omane-Kodie won the final 3-1.

Ladies Singles

This was a round robin of three players, with top seed Sally Hughes winning both of her matches and Bethany Pemberton-Hill overcoming Amy Choi, to come second.

Mixed Doubles

There were four pairs in this event. In the semis, top seeds Scott and Hughes beat Hugo Chan and Sarah Wong 3-0 and in the other half Knivett and Pemberton-Hill beat Holtam and Choi 3-1. Scott and Hughes won the final 3-0 to pick up their third and second titles of the day respectively.

Men's Doubles



Men's doubles winners Tom Holtam and Dave Pringeur

There were 12 pairs in the men's doubles in a knockout draw. The biggest upset came in the quarter-finals, where the top seeds Scott and Collins, who had received a bye to get there, lost 11-9 in the deciding game to unseeded Collado and Agnihotri. Scott and Collins had recently won the men's doubles at the Crawley and Horsham League Championships.

The other top-half quarter-final was a nailbiter, with Steel and Cooper just getting over the line 11-9 in the fifth against Loo and Li.

In the lower half of the draw, father and son combination of Varsani and Varsani upset the seedings to knock out third seeds Rowell and Adams in three close games. The last quarter-final was another close three-setter, with second seeds Holtam and Pringuer beating Pullinger and Omane-Kodie.

Steel and Cooper had a very comfortable semi against Collado and Agnihotri and Holtam and Pringuer defeated the Varsanis in a close four-set match. The final was a straightforward win for the favourites, Holtam and Pringuer, as Holtam picked up his fifth men's doubles title, mostly having played with different partners.

Ladies Doubles



The ladies' doubles finalists

There were only two pairs in this event, so it was a straight final between Hughes/Pemberton-Hill (premier/division 1) and Wong/Choi (both division 2) and the underdogs Wong/Choi excelled to win 3-1 (11-5, 6-11, 13-11, 11-6).

Junior Singles



Junior singles finalists Marcus Bracey and Ollie Guile

There were seven players in two groups in this event. Favourite, Marcus Bracey won Group 1, but Guile had a good win over premier division club-mate Joe Russell to take second place in the group. Russell lost both of his matches 11-7 in the fifth.

There was an upset in Group 2, with Pemberton-Hill overcoming second seed Viral Varsani having trailed by two games to love. Varsani came second in the group.

Guile continued his good run of results in beating Pemberton-Hill 3-0 in the semi-final, while Bracey saw off the challenge of Varsani in the other semi 3-1. In the final Bracey repeated his group straight sets victory over Guile, although it was closer this time.

Veteran Singles



Veterans' singles winner Prakash Varsani (right)

There were 13 players in four groups in this event. There were a couple of upsets in the groups, with Daniel Prakash beating third seed Rowell 3-0 and in a mini-upset Pullinger beating Weigelt 3-1.

In the quarters, top seed Prakash Varsani beat Agnihotri, Pullinger had a great 3-0 win over Rowell, Weigelt beat Daniel Prakash and Adams beat Wicks.

In the semis, Varsani won in straight sets over Pullinger and fourth seed Weigelt upset the seedings to beat second seed Adams 3-1.

The final went all the way, with Varsani stumbling over the line 11-9, 6-11, 14-12, 7-11, 11-9, with Weigelt actually winning three more points than his opponent.

Division 1 Singles



Division 1 singles finalists Ernest Omane-Kodie and Marcus Bracey

There were five groups of three in this event. In group 1, Chan just held on to the runners-up spot with an 11-9 in the fifth set win over Guile. However division 2 player Billy Keegan had a great win over division 1 player Wicks also 11-9 in the fifth.

Third seed Oliver Davis lost to both Zhihong Zeng and Matthew Johnson in the group to complete a miserable day, having entered four events and not won a single match.

In the quarters, Bracey beat Harshad Chinchakikar, Agnihotri beat Burns, Zeng beat Austera and Omane-Kodie beat Chan all in straight sets. The semis were also 3-0 with Bracey too strong for Zeng and Omane-Kodie making short work of Agnihotri.

The final was more competitive, with Bracey coming through 3-1 (5-11, 11-8, 12-10, 12-10) to win his second title of the day (out of two entered).

Division 2 Singles



Division 2 singles winner Ed Taylor

There were initially 12 players in four groups of three, but following the withdrawal of five players and the fact that it had been a long day for the players, a decision was made to change to a knockout draw. There were three quarter-finals, with Ian Peggs accounting for Johnson, Guile taking out Ian Fowlds and favourite Wong (with 92% in the league) ending Auster's hopes 11-4 in the fifth.

Ed Taylor, who was fresh, as he had only entered the division 2 singles, beat Peggs in the first semi 11-6 in the fifth and Guile, who was destroyed 4-11, 2-11 in the opening two games in his semi against Wong, came back from the dead to win the next three 11-8, 11-7, 11-9 to get to the final.

The final was almost the reverse of Guile's semi, as he won two very easy games (11-4, 11-1 in the third and fourth games) but lost the other three 13-11, 14-12, 12-10, as the title went to Taylor.

Best Performance Award

This was a close call with Ollie Guile having had some excellent results, Chris Pullinger having had two great wins over Tony Rowell and Faldie Adams and Junyi Loo having beaten Mark Collins, but in the end it was decided to give the award to Daniel Li for his quality wins over Tony Rowell and Jan Collado in getting to the semi-final of the men's singles.

Final Results

Men's Singles: Rory Scott (Hollingbury) beat Tim Holtam (Brighton City) 3-1 (14-12, 11-9, 9-11, 11-9).

Men's Consolation Singles: Ernest Omane-Kodie (Hollingbury) beat Viral Varsani (Hollingbury) 3-1 (11-8, 10-12, 11-6, 11-7).

Ladies Singles: Sally Hughes (Hollingbury) beat Bethany Pemberton-Hill (Lancing) 3-0 (13-11, 11-3, 11-7).

Handicap Singles: Rory Scott (Hollingbury) beat Jonathan Theodoridi (Hollingbury) 3-2 (9-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-9).

Handicap Doubles: Jan Collado (Hollingbury) and Simon Knivett (Lancing) beat Minesh Agnihotri and Danny Burns (both Hollingbury) 3-0 (12-10, 11-9, 14-12).

Men's Doubles: Tim Holtam and Dave Pringuer (both Brighton City) beat Dave Steel and Ben Cooper (both Hollingbury) 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-4).

Mixed Doubles: Rory Scott and Sally Hughes (both Hollingbury) beat Simon Knivett and Bethany Pemberton-Hill (both Lancing) 3-0 (11-5, 11-9, 11-6).

Ladies Doubles: Sarah Wong (Hollingbury) and Amy Choi (Brighton University) beat Sally Hughes (Hollingbury) and Bethany Pemberton-Hill (Lancing) 3-1 (11-5, 6-11, 13-11, 11-6).

Junior Singles: Marcus Bracey (Lancing) beat Ollie Guile (Brighton City) 3-0 (11-8, 11-9, 11-6).

Veterans Singles: Prakash Varsani (Hollingbury) beat Lee Weigelt (Hollingbury) 3-2 (11-9, 6-11, 14-12, 7-11, 11-9).

Division 1 Singles: Marcus Bracey (Lancing) beat Ernest Omane-Kodie (Hollingbury) 3-1 (5-11, 11-8, 12-10, 12-10).

Division 2 Singles: Ed Taylor (Railways) beat Ollie Guile (Brighton City) 3-2 (13-11, 14-12, 4-11, 1-11, 12-10).

Best Performance Award: Daniel Li (Hollingbury).

by Rory Scott (16th May 2014)

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