

Ram Raid as Alex wins fourth title at U11-14s

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Alex Ramsden. All photos courtesy of Trevor Parsons

Alex Ramsden completed the set of singles titles, and there were two trophies each for Kate Cheer and Denise Payet on the first day of the U11-14 National Championships in Doncaster.

Under-14 boys' singles

Second seed Ramsden added the Under-14 crown to the previous three age groups with a 3-0 win over surprise package Joe Clark, the No 6 seed.

The scoreline of 11-4, 11-9, 11-8 did not do justice to either player's day, with Clark having knocked out top seed Harry Dai in four (8-11, 11-6, 11-5, 11-3) in the quarter-finals before having a more routine 3-0 win against No 3 seed James Smith in the last four.

Ramsden meanwhile had an epic battle against Shayan Siraj in his semi-final, eventually prevailing on his fourth match point in the fifth (11-7, 10-12, 11-8, 9-11, 14-12).

The champion said: "I'm feeling really happy that I've won it, because I was quite nervous today.

"I was thinking 'is it going to be the day when one of them beats me?'

"But I knew when I got on the table I've got better shots and I'm stronger than them and that even though they've been playing longer than me I've played more internationals.

"I think adrenalin carried me on in the end."

The beaten finalist Clark was still satisfied with his day's work, saying: "I'm pretty happy, I played quite well.

"When I beat Harry, I was playing well and getting most of my shots on, but I didn't really get myself going in the final."

Under-14 girls' singles



Kate Cheer

Cheer added the Under-14 title to her previous victories at U11 and U13, beating Payet 3-1 in the final (11-6, 14-12, 10-12, 11-9).

The two were largely untroubled in their progress to the final, although both dropped a set in the semis – Payet to Sophie Barlow and Cheer to Isabelle Joubely.

Champion Cheer said: "I think I did really well today, I think it's one of my best Nationals – I just wanted to win more because it's my last one."

Under-14 girls' doubles

Payet and Cheer combined to romp to the title without dropping a set.

The top seeds did not concede more than eight points in a single set as they ran through the rounds to set up a final against second seeds Joubely and Amy Blagborough.

And they kept up their blistering form to clinch the trophy with an 11-3, 11-4, 11-7 victory.

Under-14 boys' doubles

Top seeds also prevailed in the boys' doubles as Ramsden and Smith saw off Olly Tyndall and Ben Foster in three

– 11-6, 11-9, 12-10.

The champions had a relatively untroubled passage to the final, dropping only one set – to Siraj and Amirul Hussain in the semis.

The same was not true of the beaten finalists, who needed four in both the last 16 and the quarter-finals and then five in the semis, when they came from 2-1 down to beat second seeds Dai and Clark.

For Smith, it was a first title after several close calls, including seven final appearances at various events, and he said: "It feels really good. I've always tried my hardest but this time me and Alex were better than the others.

"It's good playing with him because he's got a lot of experience and he's won every single year. It's good to have someone who has won lots and knows what to do."

Under-13 boys' singles



Harry Dai

Dai recovered from his shock defeat in the Under-14s boys' singles to win a classic final with fellow Yorkshireman Siraj in the dying embers of the first day.

Top seed Dai, who lost to sixth seed Clark in the older age group, stuck his head down and got down to business to repeat his success from 2012/13 when he won the Under-12s.

His knockout progress was particularly dynamic, with comfortable victories over Branislav Zivkovic, Will Ibbitson and Ethan Walsh before meeting Siraj at the final hurdle. Siraj himself had cruised to the semi-finals but faced a real battle to overcome second seed Smith 3-2 (11-2, 11-7, 10-12, 5-11, 11-8) to secure his berth in the last stage.

The contest between the two white rose players extended deep into a fifth end with excellent, combative rallies highlighting a superb level of performance. Despite the title appearing in Siraj's grasp at 10-7 up in the fifth, Dai denied his opponent a first national title by claiming five straight points to win 3-2 (13-11, 9-11, 11-6, 9-11, 12-10).

"I'm quite shocked," said Dai afterwards. "I wasn't really expecting to come back from 10-7 down – I was thinking it was going to be the year I'd lose.

"He's one of those players I'm always going to struggle against, he's got that playing style. The key was not to go for the ball when it's not there, and keep working until the right ball comes."

Under-13 girls' singles



Denise Payet

Payet proved herself to be a dominant force once again in the national championships by picking up her second title of the event late on Saturday evening.

The firm favourite from Middlesex made up for her dramatic 3-2 to defeat to Cheer in last season's final in Tipton to brush aside the challenge from Barlow in Doncaster.

Payet, who had comfortably progressed through her group, continued her fine form into the knockout stages where she gave no quarter in 3-0 wins over Charlotte Weatherby, Talia Banin-Reid and Bhavika Mistry to book her place in the final.

Meeting the top seed was the second seed Barlow who had come through two five-end encounters to secure her place in the showpiece match. A 3-2 (10-12, 13-11, 11-5, 10-12, 11-6) last 16 win over Mollie Patterson was followed up by a 3-2 (9-11, 13-11, 11-7, 4-11, 11-9) semi-final victory over Tiana Dennison as she battled her way to the final.

However, having expended all of her energy earlier, Barlow was unable to match Payet in the final as the

champion closed out her second national title from Doncaster with a comprehensive win in four games.

Payet said: "It's been tiring, the schedule makes it difficult but I kept going by thinking about the medals and the trophies!"

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Paul Stimpson/Russell Moore (May 31, 2014)

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