

Walshes keep success in the family at the ELCC finals

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The Wilmott Cup winners from North Herts – Luke, Ethan and Jimmy Walsh

The finals of the English Leagues Cup Competition took place at Westfield Table Tennis Club, Wellingborough over the weekend of 7th and 8th June.

Two of the four previous season's holders were back to defend their titles – Wembley & Harrow in the Carter Cup and Leeds in the JM Rose Bowl. Several winners in all competitions in recent years had reached the finals, while there was a smattering of new leagues to add to the flavour and mix of the weekend.

Wilmott Cup (Men)

Group A: Leamington Spa and Bournemouth got off to a good start with wins of 3-2 and 4-1 respectively against Leeds and Grimsby. Both teams continued their winning ways in round two with a 4-1 scoreline, meaning they met in the group decider in the third round.

Nathan Bingham gave Bournemouth the lead with a 3-1 win over Ryan Stockham, but Loz Sweeney levelled it, defeating Stephen Foster in five. The doubles, which also went to five, favoured Leamington Spa. A further five-setter saw Bournemouth levelled the score at 2-2.

In a tense fifth match, Nathan Bingham just had the edge, defeating Sweeney 11-7 in the fifth game and giving Bournemouth a closely fought victory and a chance for the title.

The Leeds pair of Simon Pugh and Richard Smith had a more comfortable 5-0 win over Grimsby/Cleethorpes duo of John Hancock and Jonathan Corry.

Group B: Nottingham and North Herts won both their first two rounds against Cambridge and Guildford, leaving the third round to decide on play-off positions. David Arrowsmith started well for Nottingham with a 3-0 win over Ethan Walsh, whose dad Jimmy levelled against Craig Feargrieve in a tough five-setter. The third member of the Walsh family, Luke, partnered Jimmy, to a victory in the doubles, but Feargrieve levelled at 2-2 against Ethan Walsh.

All to play for in the final match and with Jimmy Walsh's defeat of David Arrowsmith, the North Herts and Walsh family team – captained by mum Nicola, and supported by sister Natasha, were through to the finals.

Next to them, Guildford's Adam Laws and Chris Bush defeated the three-man team from Cambridge of Daniel Fielding, Kevin Gray and Mirek Pazdzior.

Play-offs

The No 1 seeds Bournemouth face No 2 seeds North Herts for the title and the trophy. Luke Walsh started with a victory over Nathan Bingham, before Stephen Foster levelled against the young Ethan Walsh. Jimmy Walsh replaced Ethan for the doubles and this stronger pairing gave North Herts the win. The title was clinched in the next match with a 4-1 win for Luke over Stephen Foster. A real family affair and as far as is known the only time members of the same family have been the winning team – added to which Ethan is probably the youngest holder of the trophy.

Leamington Spa finished in bronze medal position after a 3-1 win against Nottingham, while Guildford finished fifth following their 3-0 victory over Leeds. Due to injury, Grimsby/Cleethorpes did not play in the play-offs which, therefore, left Cambridge in seventh position.

Final standings: 1st: North Herts, 2nd: Bournemouth, 3rd: Leamington Spa, 4th: Nottingham, 5th: Guildford, 6th: Leeds, 7th: Cambridge, 8th: Grimsby/Cleethorpes.

JM Rose Bowl (Ladies)



The JM Rose Bowl winners, Bournemouth – Linda Hales and Chloe Thomas

Group A: Leamington Spa won their first two rounds against Cambridge 3-2 and Bracknell & Wokingham 4-1, while Bournemouth had 4-1 wins against the same teams.

The classy Welsh player Chloe Thomas for Bournemouth won her first against Charlotte Spencer of Leamington Spa in the third round. Kate Hughes brought the score back to evens against Linda Hales, and the doubles went Bournemouth's way although it took them five sets to obtain the result.

Thomas then put the result beyond doubt against Hughes before Spencer won her match against Hales, leaving Bournemouth in pole position in the group.

The second third round Group A match between Bracknell & Wokingham and Cambridge resulted in a 4-1 win for the latter, with Carrie Cope winning both her singles and Tracey Sambrook one. Denise Rolfe got the consolation singles for Bracknell & Wokingham.

Group B: The holders, Leeds (Zoe Cheesman and Joanna Roberts) remained undefeated in the group matches with a 4-1 wins against Leicester, Guildford and North Herts. Leicester's duo of Karen Smith and Jessica Birbeck won their remaining two matches in the group, both 4-1, against North Herts and Guildford, while North Herts' three-player team of Sandra Harper, Jan Laing and Natasha Walsh had a good 4-1 start against the pair from Guildford of Sarah Horsnell and Feifei Pei.

Play-offs

Joanna Roberts started well for Leeds against Bournemouth in the match for 1st and 2nd place. However, the experienced Chloe Thomas won both her singles and with Linda Hales, a former holder of the trophy on two previous occasions in the 1960s and 1970s, ended up 3-1 winners and champions.

There was a real tussle for the bronze medal and again the experience of former England international, Karen Smith, got Leicester off to a good start. Kate Hughes of Leamington Spa levelled the match and then her team took the lead after a close five-set doubles encounter. Karen Smith was next on and made the score 2-2 before Jessica Birbeck defeated Charlotte Spencer in five to gain a medal position for Leicester. North Herts took fifth place against Cambridge's Yan Gao and Carrie Cope, while Guildford ended in seventh position with a 3-0 victory over Bracknell & Wokingham's Denise Rolfe and Carol Byers.

Final standings: 1st: Bournemouth, 2nd: Leeds, 3rd: Leicester, 4th: Leamington Spa, 5th: North Herts, 6th: Cambridge, 7th: Guildford, 8th: Bracknell & Wokingham.

Bromfield Trophy (Junior Girls)



The Bromfield Trophy winners from Derby – Diana Rusinova and Amy Humphries

Five teams competed for the Bromfield Trophy on Sunday. The Derby duo of Diana Rusinova and Amy Humphreys were clear victors, winning each match 5-0 although they didn't have it all their own way with Amy Blagbrough (Bournemouth) and Nicole Bird (Kettering taking Amy Humphreys to five. The surprise runners-up were the team from Hull, Alice Rice and Gauri Duhan, who defeated both Leamington Spa and Bournemouth 5-0 and clinched a victory over Kettering 3-2 by dint of winning the doubles.

Third position resulted in a countback for the remaining teams as they all finished on five points. The Bournemouth girls, Amy Blagbrough and Chloe Cass, took the bronze medal position due to their 4-1 win against Leamington Spa, despite losing to Kettering, who finished fourth. The young ladies from Leamington Spa, Olivia Fletcher and Milly Bradshaw, playing in their first tournament, finished in fifth position, exceeding expectations with their win over the Kettering pair of Nicole Bird and Sidney Wright, who had earlier defeated the Bournemouth girls.

Final standings: 1st: Derby, 2nd: Hull, 3rd: Bournemouth, 4th: Kettering, 5th: Leamington Spa.

Carter Cup (Junior Boys)



The Carter Cup winners from Sheffield – Bradley Wood, David Thompson and Liam Rowson

The first round of the day saw possibly the best match of the day when Sheffield met two of the winners from the previous day's Wilmott Cup victory from the North Herts team. David Thompson got his team to a good start by defeating Luke Walsh in the first game which went to the wire 11-9 in the fifth. Some spectacular table tennis had the crowd enthralled, a real battle of giants.

Not to be outdone, Ethan Walsh put up a tremendous fight against Liam Rowson who gained the victory 11-8 in the fifth end. The doubles were in Sheffield's favour and then a second win for David Thompson before Luke Walsh got North Herts consolation win against Liam Rowson, a 4-1 win for Sheffield.

The other match in Group B saw Hugo Pang and Zac Dowling of Bournemouth have a comfortable 5-0 win against a young team from Cambridge.

Wembley & Harrow, in Group A, defeated Plymouth youngsters 4-1. Karim Khassal got a maximum and Jordan Bone the one win for Plymouth. On the next table Watford had an excellent 4-1 over the higher ranked team of Hull, with Mitchell Jones winning both his singles, some close games with three matches going the distance.

Round Two saw Sheffield continue their winning ways with a 5-0 win over Cambridge, while North Herts had a good 4-1 win over top seed in the group – Bournemouth. Meanwhile in Group A, Wembley & Harrow continued on form, defeating Hull 4-1, with Hull getting the doubles. The Watford pair of Jamie Fisher and Mitchell Jones also progressed with a 5-0 win over Plymouth.

Round Three was crunch time to decide on positions for the play-offs. Sheffield against the top seed in Group B, Bournemouth, saw another hard-fought match. Bournemouth got off to a good start with Hugo Pang winning the first, but David Thompson levelled it in the second. The doubles, which so often is crucial, went Sheffield's way, before Pang took the fourth to bring the score to 2-2. The fifth and final game resulted in a comfortable win in three straight by Bradley Wood, leaving Sheffield undefeated in their group and going through to the playoffs for first and second positions.

On the adjacent table, brothers Luke and Ethan Walsh for North Herts had a straight 5-0 although this didn't at times reflect the closeness of some of the games against Ben Brown and Sam Chesterman of Cambridge.

Group A's matches resulted in Hull's Harry Dai and James Garrod defeating Plymouth 5-0 despite spirited resistance by Jordan Bone and Harry Nicholls. Meanwhile, Watford's partnership had an excellent win against Wembley & Harrow, 4-1, who although the No 1 seeds, were without their top player.

Play-offs

Watford and Sheffield, both unbeaten throughout the day, faced each other for the championship. Sheffield's David Thompson started well with a 3-0 win over Mitchell Jones, Liam Rowson continued Sheffield's winning ways taking Jamie Fisher in three and the title was sealed with a five-set win in the doubles by David Thompson and Bradley Wood. A well deserved title by the strong three-man team from South Yorkshire, with the surprise finalists, Watford, taking the silver medal.

A battle for the bronze medal between North Herts and Wembley & Harrow resulted in Luke and Ethan Walsh being the victors after two very long days' table tennis, Karim Khassal and Erin Gozcu not being able to retain the trophy for their league. Bournemouth finished in fifth place after a win over Hull. Plymouth were seventh following a 3-0 win over Cambridge.

Final standings: 1st: Sheffield, 2nd: Watford, 3rd: North Herts, 4th: Wembley & Harrow, 5th: Bournemouth, 6th: Hull, 7th: Plymouth, 8th: Cambridge.

All in all on excellent weekend's table tennis with some close and competitive matches which were played in an excellent spirit. Thanks go to Westfield Table Tennis Club for their hospitality, facilities and food. Thanks also to the team of umpires who worked unstintingly throughout the weekend and also to Richard Hudson, Tournament Organiser, ably assisted by wife Brenda.

It would be remiss of me not to express appreciation to Vanda Jones, who as ETTA National Competitions & Events Administrator, has worked for so many seasons providing support for the event. Finally, to Zach Ferris, Competitions and Events Officer, who despite being the sole representative of the Events Department for the last couple of months worked unstintingly to ensure everything for the finals was in place to ensure everything ran smoothly over the weekend.

Diane Webb

Referee and Administrator

12th June 2014

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