

Clinton wins Halifax Veterans tournament

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CLINTON WINS HALIFAX SUMMER VETERANS TOURNAMENT

Chris Clinton of Hull was a second time winner of the mens singles in the Halifax Summer Veterans event played in the West Yorkshire town when he beat Keith Williams of Liverpool in the final although Williams had actually beaten Clinton in the group stages earlier in the day.

It was the largest entry ever received for this popular tournament which was only two short of maximum capacity 54 men and 15 ladies entering with Williams and Joanna Roberts of Pudsey being the tops seeds respectively and the first day of proceedings saw the men play in groups of mostly eight players with two groups of women as well.

In Group mens group 1 of the mens event the first surprise was the defeat of reigning champion and No 1 seed Williams by fellow Lancastrian Neil Pickard. It was Pickards first entry into the event and in a thrilling clash he just got the better of Williams 11-9 in the deciding game.

With three seeds per group in the mens event and only two qualifying for the following days elite knockout to be joined by the two top third places there was plenty of thrilling action on Saturday.

The ladies events were played to a conclusion on Saturday as were dominated by Joanna Roberts who eased through her group and was not troubles in the knockout as she retained the title comfortably beating doubles partner Sandra Rider in the semi final 3-0 and was joined in the final by first time entrant Karen Henry fro Northumberland who beat another first time entrant Denise McEvoy of Cheshire in 4 thrilling games.

Roberts showed her class in the final with a three game win over Henry and in the ladies doubles Roberts and Rider made light work of Shirley Gelder and McEvoy with a 3-nil win.

Sunday began as usual with the mens doubles which saw the winner for the last three years Chris Clinton and Ivan Lewis of Leeds being the top seeds with Keith Williams and Wakefields Mark Land seeded second and the first major shock came in the quarter final as the top seeds were dumped out by the scratch pairing of Phil Bell and Deo Jones of Leeds 3-1 (11-13, 11-8, 12-10, 11-9) and the heroics of the Leeds pairing did not finish there as they then went on to take a semi final victory over Simon Pugh and Shaun Bibby 3-2 (12-10, 5-11, 11-5, 6-11, 11-5) to grab a final place.

The other half of the draw saw another scratch pairing of Staffordshires Andy Dixon paired with the returning Richard Lightowler match up with the reigning champions Clinton and Lewis in the semi final and neither pair were prepared to give an inch as the game went to a fifth end and it was Dixon and Lightowler who held their nerve the best as they recorded a 3-2 (8-11, 11-6, 11-9, 9-11, 11-8) win to book their place in the final.

Sadly Bell and Jones could not reproduce their earlier form and in an anti climax it was Lightowler and Dixon who eased to the title in three 3-0 (11-6, 11-8, 11-4).

As the doubles began to reach its latter stages the band B event started with 11 groups of 3/4 players depending on finishing positions from the previous day with the top two from each group then qualifying for a straight knockout.

The top half of the draw saw Dale Aitkinhead from the north east face South Yorkshire players Stuart Sykes in the first quarter final while the second quarter was an all Leeds affair as Shariar Masoudi faced Phil Bell while the quarters were completed as Martin Pickles, formaly from Yorkshire but now domiciled in Northern Ireland faced Ray Hurst of South Yorkshire while another all Leeds clash saw Jones meet Phil Cawser.

The first quarter saw Sykes start the brighter and took the opening game against Aitkinhead but it was the Northumberland player who fought back and booked his semi final place with a 3-1 (10-12, 11-9, 11-2, 11-9) victory where he met Masoudi who also took four games to beat Bell 3-1 (11-5, 8-11, 11-3, 11-4).

The first quarter in the bottom half saw Hurst ease past Pickle, finally pulling away as Pickles won the opener 3-1 (8-11, 11-5, 11-6, 12-10) to book his place where he would be facing Jones who beat Cawser comfortably in three 3-0 (11-5, 12-10, 11-7).

The first semi final saw Hurst quickly put aside the challenge of Jones winning 3-0 (11-7, 11-7, 11-6) to book his place in the final where he would meet Masoudi who beat Aitkinhead also in three 3-0 (11-5, 11-2, 11-6).

Once gain the final proved a bit one sided as Masoudi took the event with a final win 3-0 (11-9, 11-3, 11-9) against his South Yorkshire opponent to provide slight consolation for the player who reached the semi final of the Elite event last year.

The elite mens event then took centre stage with the top 16 players divided into groups of four with the top two in each group qualifying for a straight knockout. and in groups one, by virtue of his win over Williams, Neil Pickard was joined by Dave Randerson from Hull and midlands player, Raj Sing.

The group was a thrilling affair with four of the six games requiring a deciding set but eventually it was Pichard who took the group but only just from Lewis as Pickard won their clash 11-9 in the fifth as the two players went through to the knockout

Elite Group 1

Pickard beat Randerson 3-1 (11-5, 11-5, 6-11, 11-6)

Lewis beat Singh 3-2 (11-8, 11-9, 5-11, 11-13, 11-6)

Pickard beat Singh 3-0 (11-4, 11-9, 11-7)

Lewis beat Randerson 3-2 (9-11, 11-5, 11-8, 8-11, 11-6)

Pickard beat Lewis 3-2 (4-11, 7-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-9)

Randerson beat Singh 3-2 (11-6, 11-5, 9-11, 4-11, 11-6)

In Group 2 Yorkshire's Simon Pugh was joined by Durham's Dave Robson, Staffordshire's Chris Tarr and fellow Yorkshire player Tim Dyson and it was Robson who took the group with 3 wins and with all the other 3 players winning one apiece it was Dyson who took second spot on countback.

Elite Group 2

Robson beat Pugh 3-1 (11-6, 11-9, 16-18, 11-7)

Dyson beat Tarr 3-0 (11-6, 11-4, 11-8)

Tarr beat Pugh 3-2 (10-12, 7-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-2)

Pugh beat Dyson 3-2 (2-11, 10-12, 11-2, 11-9, 11-3)

Robson beat Tarr 11-4 7-11 11-9 11-5

Group 3 saw Hon Kau Choy of Notts joined by Clinton, Williams and Shaun Bibby of South Yorkshire with Williams and Clinton qualifying as clear winner and runner up with Williams taking the clash between the pair.

Elite Group 3

Clinton beat Choy 3-0 (11-6, 11-6, 11-7)

Williams beat Bibby 3-0 (11-8, 11-9, 11-7)

Williams beat Choy 3-0 (11-8, 11-7, 11-6)

Clinton beat Bibby 3-0 (11-3, 11-4, 11-7)

Bibby beat Choy 3-0 (11-9, 9-11, 11-3, 11-9)

Williams beat Clinton 3-1 (11-8, 6-11, 11-7, 11-8)

Staffordshire player and doubles winner Andy Dixon was joined in group four by his victorious doubles partner Lightowler along with Yorkshire players Nick Ryder and Mark Land and it proved to be the end of the road for Dixon and Ryder as Land took the group with Lightowler runner up.

Elite Group 4

Lightowler beat Dixon 3-0 (11-9, 11-9, 11-4)
Land beat Ryder 3-0 (11-9, 11-6, 11-6)
Dixon beat Ryder 3-2 (5-11, 11-5, 8-11, 11-8, 11-7)
Land beat Lightowler 3-1 (11-6, 6-11, 11-4, 11-6)
Land beat Dixon 3-0 (11-8, 11-9, 11-6)
Lightowler beat Ryder 3-0 (11-5, 11-5, 11-3)

The knockout stage then began and the first quarter was a beauty as Pickard and Clinton opened proceedings with Pickard taking the first and their games and Clinton the second and fourth and with neither player giving an inch they not surprisingly reached 9 all before the Hull player snatched the set by taking the final two points.

Dyson took the second quarter final despite dropping the first game against Land winning 3-1 (9-11, 11-6, 11-5, 11-9) while in the third quarter Lightowler beat an out of sorts Robson 3-0 (11-6, 11-7, 11-7) and they were joined in the last four by a threatening Williams who looked like he was coming back to form as he dropped the opening game to Lewis but stormed back to win 3-1 (12-14, 11-8, 11-4, 11-6).

The first semi final saw Clinton face his fellow Yorkshire first teamer Dyson and despite Dyson levelling the set at one game each it was Clinton who prevailed in four 3-1 (11-7, 8-11, 11-5, 11-9) as the Hull player reached the final where his opponent was defending champion Williams who was far too strong for Lightowler in their semi as the Lancastrian eased through to the final 3-0 (11-6, 11-3, 11-8).

Clinton and Williams have been regular opponents recently as when the torch relay for the Commonwealth Games went through Hull, the pair played an exhibition match in Hull Town Hall to celebrate their city of culture successes so the pair were used to each others play and they had also met in the group stages less than two hours earlier.

On this occasion Clinton proved too strong for his opponent and never allowed Williams to settle winning 3-1 (11-8, 11-7, 8-11, 11-2) to take the title and the £100 first prize for the second time.

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