

# Ramsden and Payet take singles titles

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Top seeds Alex Ramsden and Denise Payet took their maiden Cadet singles titles at day two of the Cadet & Junior Nationals in Preston.

## Boys' singles

Alex Ramsden saw off second seed Harry Dai in four to take the first leg of a possible double.

The top seed set the tone by opening up a 6-1 lead and although Dai closed the gap, the first blood was drawn by Ramsden 11-8.

Ramsden then found himself 10-8 down in the second and profited from an edge ball as he saved the first game point. With both players sensing the game could be pivotal, it was Ramsden who took it 14-12.



Alex Ramsden on his way to victory in Preston (picture by Steve Parkin)

Dai was not about to let the title go without a fight, though, and a run of four points from 7-6 saw him take the third.

Ramsden always had his nose in front in the fourth and a net cord in his favour made it 9-5. He won the next point too, only for Dai to have a net cord go his way to save the first match point. But he could save no more as Ramsden added the Cadet title to his U11, U12, U13 and U14 crowns from previous seasons.

Ramsden had started the day strongly, but dropped a set to Sam Chesterman in the last 16.

But his biggest hurdle was in the semi-finals, where he faced Joe Clark in a repeat of the Under-14 national final from last season.

Ramsden had one foot in the final at 2-0 up, but his Cleveland opponent showed tremendous fight to take the third 12-10 and then levelled to eight.

However, Ramsden is something of a five-set specialist and took the decider 11-5 to ensure the top two seeds would contest the final.

Dai's progress through the earlier rounds had been serene as he did not drop a set until the semi-finals, when James Smith drew first blood. Dai leveled and took a pivotal third 14-12.

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## Girls' singles



Denise Payet in action in Preston (picture by Steve Parkin)

Top seed Denise Payet became Cadet champion for the first time as she edged a tight five-setter with No 3 seed Sophie Barlow.

Barlow started quickly, opening up a 5-2 lead on her way to taking the first 11-5, but Payet turned up the power as she pulled out the next two to three and seven.

The fourth was tight and from 9-9, Barlow brought up three successive game points, clinching the set on the third at 13-11.

But Payet was not to be denied and took the last 11-6 to repeat the outcome from when the two met in last season's Under-13 National final.

Payet had been relatively comfortable in her last-four clash as she defeated Amy Blagbrough in three straight.

By contrast, Barlow had to dig in in her semi-final, which also went to five. She found herself 2-1 down to Gauri Duhan before winning the next two.

To complete a trio of five-setters, Barlow's tournament had also almost ended in the last 16 as she trailed 2-0 to Georgina Lister before turning it around – kick-started by an 11-1 third game.

The shock of the competition came at the same stage when defending champion and second seed Kate Cheer was beaten in five by national Under-11 champion Jasmin Wong.

Wong came from 1-0 down to lead 2-1 and then took the decider 11-9 after Cheer had levelled.

It was a second successive five-setter for Wong, who had showed even greater resilience in coming from 2-0 down to defeat Megan Gidney in the first round.

Her efforts may have taken their toll as she lost in three one-sided sets to Duhan in the quarters.

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### Boys' doubles



Harry Dai and Joe Clark celebrate their victory (picture by Steve Parkin)

Second seeds Harry Dai and Joe Clark ended the title hopes of Alex Ramsden and James Smith in a pulsating final.

Neither pair were unduly troubled reaching the final – Dai and Clark without dropping a set and Ramsden and Smith for the loss of only one, to Harry Nicholls and George Coulson in the first round.

But the final was a different matter as the pair traded blows in four close games which culminated in Dai and Clark, who had led 1-0, taking the fourth 15-13 to level at 2-2.

The decider was almost tame by comparison as the lower-ranked pair ran through it 11-3 to deny Ramsden and Smith a title to add to their U14 doubles success from last season.

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### Girls' doubles



Kate Cheer and Denise Payet at the end of their final against Megan and Alice Dillon (picture by Steve Parkin)

Top seeds Denise Payet and Kate Cheer did not drop a set on their way to victory.

For Cheer it was a second successive title, having partnered Kate Nixon to victory last year, beating Payet and Zahna Hall in the final.

As a pair, the two top singles players were too strong for all their opponents, and they beat sisters Megan and Alice Dillon in the final – taking the crucial second 13-11.

The Dillons had fought hard to get into the final, with two 3-2 victories in the previous rounds.

The quarters saw them overcome Tiana Dennison and singles runner-up Sophie Barlow, battling back from losing a mammoth fourth 17-15 to take the decider 11-7.

And in the semi-finals they overturned a 2-0 deficit to beat Isabelle Joubely and Amy Blagbrough.

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