

# Cippenham Open: Pilgrim progresses to take title

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Veterans' Singles winner Martin Gunn (left) and runner-up Diccon Gray

The Cippenham Open, played on Saturday, may have been billed as both a senior and veterans' event but it was the veterans who stole the honours in both categories.

This 1-star event attracted a good entry, both in terms of numbers and standard and proved that you are not over the top at 40. The veterans who stayed on after their own event in the morning enjoyed more success in the Open event in the afternoon, dispatching their younger competitors at every stage.

The star of the show was Martin Gunn. The Avon veteran has recently ditched his modern sandwich bat, favoured by most other players, for an old-fashioned hard rubber bat. Gunn said that after playing with sandpaper bats in the new World Championships of Ping Pong series, "he really enjoyed the old style of the game" and "was beating players he sometimes did not with his more conventional bat".

So it proved as, after winning the veterans' event, he went all the way to the final of the Open event where he lost to another veteran, Adrian Pilgrim.

Pilgrim had been top seeded in both events but had come unstuck in the morning in the quarter-final when faced with Jojo Seniorin. Seniorin was comprehensively beaten in the semi-final by Gunn, who then went on to beat Diccon Gray in the final.

Seniorin had actually been seeded second but failed to win his group, after being beaten by Dave Langham, and was therefore displaced by his conqueror in the knockout draw. Langham's run continued past Dean Rose but he was then eclipsed by Daniel Lucking as the Generation 2 player exceeded expectations by reaching the semi-final.

The last local players standing in the veterans' event were Mark Banks and Hari Gehlot, who are team-mates for Cookham Social in the Maidenhead League. They both took their leave in the quarters, while Cippenham's own Simon Vine and Bovingdon Green's John Barclay, whose progress featured a good win over Steve Davis, fell one round earlier.

Vine, in his first tournament for a couple of decades, played well enough to beat the consolation winner Paul Martindill in his group and was pleased to finish as high as second, losing only to the No 1 seed.



Senior singles winner Adrian Pilgrim (right) and runner-up Martin Gunn

No mishaps got in the way of Adrian Pilgrim's progress in the afternoon Open singles. The top seed won his group with some comfort and then eased past Ricky Hardcastle and Dave Randall before gaining revenge for his morning defeat when coming back from 2-1 down to defeat Seniorin in the semi-final.

The final itself was also a five-game event but Pilgrim was never behind against Gunn.

Three of the four players in the semi-finals were veterans and it was left to Rory Scott to fly the flag for the under-40s. Scott won his group and then eliminated Christopher Penrose – who had earlier scored a good win over fourth seed Mohammad Owadally – and Steve Davis before losing to Gunn.

Gehlot, Barclay and Cippenham's Ricky Hardcastle were the last remaining locals but none of them got further than the round of 16. Joining them at that stage was former Cippenham player Steve Dorrell, making a welcome return to his old club after moving to Worcestershire more than 20 years ago.

Also of local note were the win by Bassam Mocharrafi over Steve Davis and the performance of Cippenham member Hari Prasad in reaching the final of the consolation, where he lost to the experienced Tony Morris.

The event was organised by Paul Baker and refereed by Ken Phillips.

#### **Results**

Senior Singles – winner: Adrian Pilgrim (Wa); runner-up: Martin Gunn (Av)

Senior Consolation – winner: Tony Morris (Sx); runner-up: Hari Prasad (Bu)

Veterans' Singles – winner: Martin Gunn (Av); runner-up: Diccon Gray (K)

Veterans' Consolation – winner: Paul Martindill (E); runner-up: Syd Montgomery (Bk)

**Graham Trimming**

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