

Young stars reflect on Preston achievements

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What a great two days of competition we had at the Cadet & Junior Nationals in Preston!

Trophies were lifted in a total of nine competitions across boys and girls, singles and doubles.

[Click here for Day One \(Juniors\) report and results](#)

[Click here for Day Two \(Cadets\) report and results](#)

[Click here to view Steve Parkin's pictures from the event](#)

Here, the winners and runners-up reflect on their achievements.



Maria Tsaptsinos celebrates with her father Dimitris

Maria Tsaptsinos: "I didn't think I was on form at all until the final – I thought Tin-Tin was going to wallop me. But for some reason when I get into a final, sub-consciously something changes and I start playing table tennis.

"Whoever gets the best start in sets tends to dominate but the final set is always close.

"We're really good friends, we've played each other for years and we know each other's games. She doesn't need to tell me what serve she's doing, I know by looking at her face, her position, what she's going to do – but that works in the singles as well!"



Tin-Tin Ho in action in Preston

Tin-Tin Ho: "It's been good. It was good to win the mixed doubles again and in the girls' doubles we didn't drop a set. Obviously I'm a bit disappointed with the singles final, but we both played well. It was a good match and it was very close. We know each other really well, so it can go either way. We're close friends off the table. When we play each other that goes away, but afterwards we're friends again."



Helshan Weerasinghe with some of his trophy haul

Helshan Weerasinghe: "It feels really good to have won all three. Last year I won two and got to the other final, so it's nice to win the clean sweep.

"I think the fact that I'm No 1 seed, and it's my last year as a Junior, people didn't really believe they could win against me – that's what I felt. I didn't feel I played at the top of my game, but my experience and the feeling the others had aided me to come through in the end.

"Marcus (Giles, beaten finalist) was 1-0 and 5-2 up and playing really well but I don't think he truly believed he could beat me over five sets. Once I got back into the second game I knew I had a really good chance to win 3-1. I kept my focus and was quite comfortable in the end.

"It was a nice feeling to win a hat-trick of titles with Tin-Tin. She's a good partner to play with – we listen to each other and our games complement each other. I changed partners in the boys' doubles and it paid off – we just clicked."



Marcus Giles, who reached the boys' singles final

Marcus Giles: "I feel really good. I wasn't really expecting to get to the final before I came here. The final wasn't as good as I hoped but it was still a great achievement to get to my first Junior final.

"My flicking was going really well and I was staying focused the whole day. Every match, I took it one step at a time. I thought I did have a chance when I was 1-0 up but I messed up a chance to go 2-0 up. I still carried on, but he definitely stepped it up."



Tom Jarvis won his first Junior title

Tom Jarvis: "Obviously I'm quite disappointed that the singles didn't go as well as I wanted – I was aiming to get to the semi-finals and further. But at least I've got a national title to go away with and I'm really happy about that.

"I didn't play too badly against Marcus (Giles, who beat Jarvis in the quarter-finals), but I didn't play as clever as I could have and he was at the top of his form.

"Me and Helshan had only ever played one match at doubles, at the World Schools Championships in France, and we won that, so we're still unbeaten. I think we play quite well together. We obviously haven't had much practice but we've played each other a lot of times and know each other quite well."



Cadet champion Alex Ramsden with his trophy

Alex Ramsden: "Every year it seems like it gets harder because I'm not the only one who's improving. I come here thinking 'I've improved lots' but everyone else has, and dark horses can play well on the day.

"But it's obviously very good to win again. The next one is Junior, but that might take a few years.

"In the doubles it felt like we should have won but they played better than us in the last two sets and we were missing too much."



Harry Dai and Joe Clark

Joe Clark: "I've never won a national title before, so it feels good. When we were 2-1 down, we started to work together and play together more as a pair rather than as individuals. We encouraged each other and if we lost a point, we just kept going."

Harry Dai: "It's our first Cadet title, so I feel quite proud. It shows if you work as a team you can do wonderful things."

On his singles final defeat: "Obviously, Alex is an older player and stronger and has more experience, but it's good that I can get to the final and give him a good game."



Cadet singles champion Denise Payet

Denise Payet: "This is really good for me because I've been working really hard in the past year and my coaches have been putting a lot of time and effort in. Winning this shows that I've got better.

"Me and Kate are really good friends and it really helps that we play together internationally and at training camps – it helps us to improve. And we enjoy it and have fun while we're doing it."



Kate Cheer

Kate Cheer: "In the doubles we didn't lose a set. I hope we can stay with each other in future years. We've played together in international matches – we took two Russian girls to 15-13 in the fifth at the Spanish Youth Open and they went on to win the event, so we know how to play against good players and that helps when we come back here. We get on really well, which also helps."

On her defeat to Jasmin Wong in the last 16 of the singles: "I didn't really play badly – I was actually happy with it, she just played really well. I didn't miss much but she was getting a lot on the table. I had quite a hard draw meeting her in the first round – everyone knows she's a better player than her rating."

Also in Preston the **Mike Watts Achievement Awards** were presented to the girl and boy who made the greatest improvement in ratings points between August 1 2013 and July 31 2014.

The boys' award went to Shayan Siraj, while the girls' honour went to Gauri Duhan.



Shayan Siraj with Table Tennis England Head of Marketing Gerry Cronin



Gauri Duhan with Gerry Cronin

Last but by no means least, the former Commonwealth Table Tennis Champion from Teesside, Carole Moore (nee Knight), has been elected a Vice-President of Table Tennis England. Carole, 58, received her award from Table Tennis England Chair Sandra Deaton.

This is an Honorary award which recognises Carole's achievements and contribution to the sport of Table Tennis for more than 40 years.



Carole Moore (right) with Table Tennis England Chair Sandra Deaton

In her prime playing days she was the Commonwealth Champion in 1982 and won the Women's Singles in the English Championships in 1977, 1980 and 1983.

She later went on to become a coach, working mainly at the Ormesby Club. Some of her early pupils were to become England's current squad members Paul Drinkhall and Danny Reed.

More recently Carole has been working at the Northfield Club in Billingham and bringing through another crop of talented players, including Joe Clark.

(Additional information courtesy of Alan Ransome)

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