

Nottingham students celebrate Grand Prix victories

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It might not have been a traditional Saturday night in Nottingham, but local students Liam McTiernan and Yolanda King were given a reason to party after taking the big prizes on the first day of the Nottingham Grand Prix.

Men's Band 1



Liam McTiernan and Jon Hall with Table Tennis England Competition and Events Manager Amanda Robinson

A staggeringly long day came to a close with Liam McTiernan stood at the top of the mountain after clinching the Band 1 title.

A mammoth day, lasting an astonishing 13-and-a-half hours, came to a conclusion with McTiernan beating the brave Jon Hall in the final.

McTiernan, playing at his home venue in the shape of the University of Nottingham, proved to have the superior stamina as he played through the night, finishing precisely at 22:21, to take the day's major gong.

He had already disposed of Matt Outhwaite and Gabriel Achampong before taking on Hall, who he had previously defeated in five in the group stages. Hall had done superbly to reach the final, beating Callum Evans and Steve Beerling to make the showpiece.

With time dragging on, and with the hall only available until 22:30, those left in attendance were fearing the worst after their earlier meeting. However, McTiernan had it slightly easier this time around, taking the match in four, with nine minutes remaining, to seal a Grand Prix crown.

Women's Band 1



Yolanda King (right) and Jo Roberts with Amanda Robinson

Yolanda King secured the Band 1 crown after overcoming three competitors in a round-robin competition.

King saw off Jo Roberts, Sophie Neil and Isobel Ashley to clinch the title at the University of Nottingham sports hall, where King frequently trains.

Her first victory was a 3-0 win over Sophie Neil, before conquering her biggest challenge in the shape of Roberts, beating the eventual runner up 3-1.

Still needing victory to secure the title, King defeated Isobel Ashley 3-0 to wrap up another Grand Prix crown.

Men's Band 2



Dominic Schaufelberger and Federico Viterbo with Peter Wilkinson of Tees Sport

Dominic Schaufelberger claimed the Band 2 prize after battling past a siege of reputable opponents. Schaufelberger, who came through Aaron McKibbin in his group, defeated Callum Evans 3-1 in the first knock-out before claiming the prize of second seed Gabriel Achampong 3-2 in the quarter finals. That victory set up a

tie with Ian Musk, which he took in four after dropping the first end 14-12.

His opponent in the final was Federico Viterbo, who had also been forced to battle his way through the earlier stages. Having won his group, Viterbo dispatched Ryan Fellows and John Taylor before beating Matt Outhwaite in the semi-final. It was a contest that demanded him to bring his a-game. Having led two games to nil, Viterbo found himself four match points down in the fifth after Outhwaite responded with a tight deuce victory in the third before a thumping 11-1 result in the fourth. However, Viterbo excelled on the big stage, winning six consecutive points to take the final end 12-10.

Unfortunately for him, he couldn't replicate that performance in the final as Schaufelberger took the contest in three ends, with his consistent re-looping hassling his opponent into mistakes.

Women's Band 2



Jo Roberts (right) and Gosia Muda with Peter Wilkinson

Jo Roberts convincingly disposed of her opposition to claim the Band 2 crown. In a result that moved her to the top of the circuit standings, Roberts was rarely threatened on her way to the title.

Having come through her group unscathed, Roberts defeated Amy Humphreys in the semi-finals to seal a final date against Gosia Muda, who defeated Beth Farnworth and Amy Blagbrough to make the final.

However the match had barely started before it was over, with Roberts saving her best performance until last as she cruised to a three game victory 3, 3 ,4.

Men's Band 3



Josh Harland (left) and James Hobson with Amanda Robinson

Joshua Harland produced one of his best performances to date to clinch the highly competitive Band 3 crown.

Seeded seventh, Harland put in a typically passionate display to claim the trophy, overcoming Band 4 winner James Hobson in the final.

Ormesby's Harland went about his business quietly, guiding himself through the rounds before meeting Hobson in the decider.

He had previously defeated Karim Khassal and Daniel Fielding to reach the final whilst Hobson came through two five set thrillers against Shaquille Webb-Dixon and James Garrod.

Ultimately, that seemed to take the wind out of Hobson's sails as he was outworked by the more energetic Harland, who took the final 3-1.

Women's Band 3



Sally Hughes and Beth Farnworth with Amanda Robinson

Sally Hughes reigned supreme by claiming the Band 3 competition.

Hughes was made to wait before even featuring in the event after winning her group by default, with all the other players pulling out.

But when she was given her chance to shine she flourished, defeating Maria Lebedeva 3-0 before prevailing in a five-end cracker against Teresa Bennett. Her final match was against top seed Beth Farnworth, who had defeated Gosia Muda to make the final. However Farnworth couldn't keep up with Hughes, who raced to a straight ends victory to take the title.

Men's Band 4



James Hobson and Calum Morrison with Peter Wilkinson

In what was one of the most competitive and entertaining events of the day, James Hobson eventually prevailed amongst a wealth of talent.

Crammed with shocks and surprises, numerous big names succumbed in the early stages of the event, a testament to the competitive nature of the band.

In the end, it was the unseeded Hobson who guided his way to the finish line, but not before he was made to work hard for the crown.

Having come through his group as leader, Hobson defeated Ryan Lunn and Philip Thomas to make it into the quarter-finals.

That is where the fun began. His first major threat was Eren Gozcu, who came from a set behind on two occasions to take the contest to five, which Hobson took 11-7.

Yet it was even tougher in the last four, where he came up against Graeme Barella. A sense of déjà vu lingered as Hobson surrendered a game cushion on two occasions. It looked to have proved him costly as he went 10-6 down in the fifth before staggeringly taking the decider 14-12.

It had been equally as tough for Hobson's opponent in the final, Calum Morrison. The Scottish hotshot had beaten higher ranked players Steve Smith and David Wetherill to top his group before defeating Timmy Cooper to make the last 16. An early test came in the shape of third seed Max Tupper, only for Morrison to fend off his attentions 3-1, before he went on to defeat Patrick Green 3-0.

In the semi-final Morrison faced Sam Do, who had been impressive on his way to the last four. Yet it didn't stop Morrison claiming the match, eventually prevailing in five.

Unfortunately, the final didn't live up to the spectacle it promised to be, with Hobson comfortably taking the final 3-0. His hard, aggressive hitting too good for Morrison on this occasion.

Women's Band 4



Morgan Sykes with Peter Wilkinson

Morgan Sykes prevailed in a four person round-robin to superbly claim the Band 4 crown.

In what was a competitive group, Sykes triumphed in all three of her matches to take the crown, whilst the other three competitors went to count back.

Sykes opened her account with her toughest match, grinding out a five end victory against Bhavika Mistry. Victory over Hannah Noutch followed before securing the crown with an impressive 3-1 win against Anna Hursey.

Men's Band 5



Calum Morrison (right) and Timmy Cooper with Amanda Robinson

Promising Scot Calum Morrison avenged his Band 4 final defeat by claiming the Band 5 title. Morrison lived up to his billing as second seed to beat all of those ranked below him, dropping sets sporadically in the process.

It was an impressive performance of stamina from the youngster, as his last game finished at 9PM, over 12 hours after his first of the day.

His final triumph came against Timmy Cooper, a player he had previously defeated in Band 4. Morrison had

beat Billy Shilton, Lee Dorning and Dariusz Gulbicki whilst Cooper had defeated Marc Castro and top seed James Berry.

Cooper did test Morrison, and took the second end. However it barely fazed Morrison, who took the third and then the fourth 11-2 to close out the competition.

Men's Band 6



Chun Yin Yu (left) and Malc Truman with Peter Wilkinson

Newcastle student Chun Yin Yu impressed in his maiden Grand Prix event as he convincingly won Band 6.

In what was an incredibly convincing display, Yu hardly broke a sweat as he stormed to his first title in as many attempts.

His performances were so dominant he was elevated to Band 3 instead of Band 5 in the afternoon's events.

Yu dropped just one set on his way to the title, in his quarter-final with Lee Dorning. His final opponents didn't cause him as much bother, disposing of Cade Short in the last four and then Malc Truman, who had defeated Marc Castro and Yu Huang beforehand, 3-0 in the final.

By Matthew Shaw

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