

Cippenham Team 2-Star Open Is a Class Act

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Once again, the ever popular Cippenham Team 2-Star Open attracted a maximum entry of twenty-four teams although one unfortunately had to pull out through illness. That did not detract from the tournament though and eight tables were kept busy all day. This annual event, now in its ninth running, is unique in two respects: firstly, it for teams of two players rather than individuals, and secondly, it adopts the progressive rather than straight knock-out principle and so no team leaves after losing and the day finishes with all the teams ranked between 1 and 24.

The final was played out by teams called Class Act and Beaufort. Earlier in the day that appeared to be most unlikely as both finalists lost one of their preliminary round group matches and had to force their way into contention for even a top eight position through a two-match repechage.

"Class Act", a team made up of Welshmen Neil Wright and Steve Buck, thereafter did justice to their name although there were a few spills and thrills along the way. Having been beaten by BATTs Hardbats, for whom Martin Gunn won twice, Class Act beat 22 Shaftesbury 2-0 in the group and thereafter went through a field of Sonic + Tails 2-0, Expert in a Year? 2-1 and Penetrate also 2-1. Whereas, in the preliminary round group a team could win a match on the talent of their number one player only, in the progressive knock-out a variation of the regulations required both players in a team to be successful, and in Steve Buck the Welsh team had a player in prime form. In fact, throughout the entire day, Buck tasted defeat only against Martin Gunn.



Their semi-final against top seeds Horsham Spinners was emphatic. Neil Wright, a frequent and welcome visitor, not unfamiliar to success in tournaments at Cippenham, despatched Jojo Seniorin 3-0. Then Buck made his team's place in the final secure with a 3-1 win against Rory Scott. The Welsh dragon was roaring!

Over in the other half of the draw, the Midlands combination of Michael Bree and Jody Bevington, playing as Beaufort, were following a similar path. Both lost to Renan Vieira Wiest as the duo lost their opening match against Ernest Bevin College Greenhouse. After that Bree came good and won his two against Bristol Bad Boys for whom former Cippenham member Shane Clark beat Bevington and Bree just got past Dean Cundy 11-9 in the fifth and deciding game. Failure in that set would have meant a top eight finish was out of reach for the eventual runners-up. The whole group was a magnificent contest that took a hour longer than scheduled to finish with every team match required a deciding set and three of the sets were decided by the narrowest of possible margins.

Beaufort then went on to beat Breaking Bats 2-0, Tree Dash 2-1, The Titans 2-0 and, in the semi-final, Defusion 2-1. For Tree Dash, Portuguese international Ana Neves, currently ranked 354 in the World, beat Bree and she was defeated only by Jojo Seniorin and Renan Vieira Wiest all day.



The final was a cracking match. Michael Bree was in scintillating form as he despatched Neil Wright 11-7, 11-3, 11-2 but Steve Buck, a former Cippenham player, hit back to beat Jody Bevington 3-1. It was therefore left to the two losing players to slug it out for the title, and slug it out they did! First game to Wright 11-8, then the second to Bevington 11-9. The third game was pivotal with Wright winning 16-14 but Bevington was not finished and hit back 11-8 to take the match into a decider. Both players gave their all but, in the end, it was Wright who prevailed 11-9, a truly class act!

From a local perspective, two of Cippenham's British League second team squad teamed up as RAF and R.A.F. They had a tough draw at the start of the day and finished up playing in the bottom third. It was a case of nearly against top seeds Horsham Spinners as Tony Stead lost 11-9 in the fifth to Jojo Seniorin and Steve Smith 11-7 in

the fifth against Rory Scott. Both had been two games to one up. Hari Vennapusa teamed up with Kingsiher's Sam Liu as Harlequins and they, conversely, had the luck of the draw and finished up in the top third, eventually settling for eighth position.

The tournament was organised and refereed by Graham Trimming and attracted a maximum 24 entries.

Finishing positions:

1. Class Act (Neil Wright; Steve Buck)
2. Beaufort (Michael Bree; Jody Bevington)
3. Defusion (Andreas Pusch; Edger Berridge)
4. Horsham Spinners (Jojo Senior; Rory Scott)
5. The Titans (Mohammad Owadally; Patrick Green)
6. Penetrate (Rajan Waterman; Michael Julian)
7. The Tactical Tictacs (Martin Matuzevicius; Ed Slot)
8. Harlequins (Sam Liu; Hari Vennapusa)

Graham Trimming

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