

Gunn's blazing in the west yet again

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2015 Champion, Martin Gunn

Now in its eighth year, the Bristol & District Table Tennis Association once again staged the highly popular Hard Bat competition in which only the identical bats provided on the day are allowed to be used.

After the initial group stages, the competition split into the next round of group matches which would determine the six semi-finalists for each of the two trophies. By mid-afternoon last year's winner, **Chris Edwards**, unfortunately found himself up against the 2012 champion, **Martin Gunn**, who was in blistering form and eventually succumbed in two straight games. In the other three-way semi-final, **Dave Reeves**, (the 2013 champion) had a slight wobble against **Sven Pettersson**, but he too triumphed. The eagerly-awaited final itself was probably the best Hard Bat final witnessed in this competition's history. Martin raced away with the first game, winning 21-9 and it looked ominous for Dave trailing at 10-6, but he hung in and at 16-15 took the lead. With the crowd hoping for a third game, he had match point at 20-19, but uncharacteristically served off the table. Martin claimed the set at 23-21. So our congratulations go to our worthy 2015 champion, **Martin Gunn**, who did not drop a game throughout. Although there are over 5000 hits on YouTube now of our 2011 Hard Bat final between **Steve Hall** and **Shaun Hall**, when this year's final is uploaded, that number may well be eclipsed.

In the Plate final, last year's winner, 79 year old **Dennis Coombe**, became the first player in the competition to retain his trophy for back to back years by beating **Shaun Fitzpatrick** 3-0 (21-15, 18-21, 21-15).

This popular hard bat competition was initially created to remind our members of their Association's prestigious 113 year history and to reiterate the fact that the B&DTTA is the oldest league in the world. With such famous players over the years as **Charlie Dawes**, **Doug Shipton**, **Clifford Axe**, **Aubrey Simons** (once ranked fourth in the world), **Gilbert Belsten** and even the inaugural Daily Mirror competition winner in May 1923, **James Thompson**, all of whom have represented England, we are obviously extremely proud of our history. If anyone is able to help with any historical information, e.g., old photographs, paperwork, pre-War handbooks, etc. connected to our league which would help our archives that would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

John Ruderham,

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