

Champions crowned at Jack Petchey Finals

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It was a busy day's play at the Jack Petchey Team Finals (picture by Mark Lees)

Barnes Primary School and London Academy were double winners at the Jack Petchey London Schools Table Tennis Team Finals.

Dozens of pupils from schools across the capital paraded their skills at the University of East London in Stratford, with the event doubling as the Zone 6 Finals of the ESTTA Butterfly National Team Championships.

The man who makes it all possible, Jack Petchey CBE, was himself in attendance for the closing stages and prize-giving, while London Paralympics bronze medallist Ross Wilson and England ace Darius Knight were on hand to add a little stardust pass on some tips to the youngsters.

There were plenty of thrilling matches, and none more so than in the Under-19 Boys' final, in which defending champions Harefield Academy took on London Academy in a repeat of last year's final.

And there was a repeat of the scoreline and the outcome as well as, after a 4-4 draw, Harefield took the trophy 15-14 on countback.

The winners had led 3-1 and 4-2, but London kept themselves in the hunt as Karim Khassal beat Ben Naylor-Smith to make it 4-3 and Musa Sharif Ali levelled by beating Guarav Aravind after coming from 2-0 down. But the 3-2 scoreline in that final match was to prove crucial.

London Academy were the victors in the Under-16 event, defending the title they won last year with a 6-2 win in the final against Morpeth School.

Countback was needed in both Under-13 Boys' semi-finals and in the final as all the matches ended in 4-4 draws. Raines Foundation prevailed 14-12 against London Academy and Wallington County Grammar 17-13 against Harefield Academy in the last-four clashes.

A thrilling final ebbed and flowed too, with both teams leading before the scoreline stood at 3-3 after six contests.

Denon Williams put Raines ahead with a 3-1 win over Ajay Potavadoo, but Ivan Wong's 3-0 victory over Shaun Douglas saw the referee's verdict needed. And it went 16-14 in favour of Wallington.

With no defending champions in the Under-11 Boys' event, it was Barnes Primary who filled the void with a 7-1 victory over Fircroft, despite their opponents drawing first blood in the final.

In the Girls' competitions all four age groups were played on a round-robin basis.

Defending champions North London Collegiate dominated the Under-19 contest, winning all three matches 8-0 against Eastbury Comprehensive, Royal Russell and Crest Academy. Eastbury's 5-3 win over Crest was enough to see them into second spot.

In the Under-16s, the champions again put in a successful defence as London Academy won their three fixtures, though Newstead Wood did take two matches off the winners, who made it an Under-16 double for the Academy.

Capital City Academy were second, with two wins out of three.

There were new winners of the Under-13 title as St James' Catholic High School and Newstead Wood School both outstripped last year's winners Burlington Danes Academy.

The matches were tight, however, with both schools beating the Academy 5-3.

The key match to decide the title saw St James' beat Newstead 6-2 to ensure they took home the trophy.

The defending champions were also usurped in the under-11s as Fox Primary finished second to Barnes Primary, who sealed an Under-11 double. It was a 5-3 scoreline in favour of Barnes which proved crucial when the teams met, Barnes opening a 2-0 lead and pulling out to a 5-1 advantage.



The West Lodge Primary School team with Paralympian Ross Wilson

Star guests Wilson and Knight were certainly impressed with what they saw at the University of East London.

Wilson said: "It's good to get the schools to compete against each other, plus it's fun and builds their team mentality.

"There's a lot of talent in the hall – it's good to see."

Knight added: "Jack Petchey gave me my first award in table tennis when I was about 12, so this is part of how I got where I am today.

"It wasn't as big as this – it's nice to see the evolution of it and it's important for table tennis that this goes on.

"For the kids, it makes them compete, makes them better and they build relationships and friendships and that's the most important thing."

Table Tennis England would like to thank the Jack Petchey Foundation and the English Schools Table Tennis Association, plus the staff from the University of East London, for their contributions to the event.

Results

Under-19 Boys

Harefield Academy 4-4 London Academy (Harefield win 15-14 on countback)

Under-19 Girls

Round-robin: North London Collegiate (winners), Eastbury Comprehensive (runners-up)

Under-16 Boys

London Academy 6-2 Morpeth School

Under-16 Girls

Round-robin: London Academy (winners), Capital City Academy (runners-up)

Under-13 Boys

Raines Foundation 4-4 Wallington County Grammar (Wallington win 16-14 on countback)

Under-13 Girls

Round-robin: St James' Catholic High (winners), Newstead Wood (runners-up)

Under-11 Boys

Barnes Primary 7-1 Fircroft Primary

Under-11 Girls

Round-robin: Barnes Primary (winners), Fox Primary (runners-up)

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