

Unbeaten Snelson takes Cippenham vets' title

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Champion Phil Snelson (right) and runner-up Daniel Heo

Top seed Phil Snelson ultimately prevailed in the Cippenham Super 6 Veterans' 2-Star Open on Saturday while the upsets occurred all around him.

Snelson was the only one of the four seeded players to remain undefeated in the preliminary round groups. Each of those groups contained either six or seven players and so became a test of stamina as well as skill.

In Group 1, the second ranked player, Danny Lucking, retired through injury and his expected second place was taken by Daniel Heo. From there, Heo commenced an amazing run that would take him right through to the final of the championship knockout where he would once again meet Snelson. Andy Bugden was the other of the three players from the top group to qualify for the championship event.

Group 2 was turned on its head with the fifth ranked player, Bharat Malde, playing some of the best table tennis of his life, winning all his matches to come through top. Along the way he beat second seed Dave Langham 3-0, while only Ken Lewis and Paul Massey managed to take a game off him. That loss to Malde was Langham's only defeat and he duly qualified in second place, although he needed five games to get the better of Ajay Shah, who finished third.

Third seed Christos Hannides, who plays for Cippenham in the Veterans' British League, did manage to win his group but not before falling victim to a local Cippenham player, Simon Vine. Vine however, lost to Paul Baker, the third Cippenham player in this group, and to Leslie Samuels, while Baker lost to Hannides and Nigel Naylor-Smith. Of the three players who had all won four times, it was Baker and Samuels who progressed to the championship event while Vine was relegated to fourth place.

Chris Price eased his way unbeaten through Group 4, leaving fourth seed Paul Martindill in second place. Dean Rose, by virtue of his win over Tom Carr, claimed the third qualifying spot while Graham Trimming recorded a profitable win over Tony Morris.

Into the knockout rounds and in the top half of the draw the two group winners made it through to the semi-final. Snelson beat Martindill in his quarter-final while at the same stage Hannides beat Langham 12-10 in the fifth game.

It was a different matter in the bottom half as both group winners lost their quarter-final matches. Price succumbed in four games to Heo while Malde's impressive run was halted by Baker after he had led 2-1.

Cippenham's last survivors both fell at the semi-final stage. Baker lost in straight games to Heo while Hannides took only one game off Snelson. The final ebbed this way and that before the greater consistency of Snelson eventually prevailed 11-8 in the fifth.

In the consolation event, tournament organiser Graham Trimming made it through to the final where he met Tony Morris for the second time on the day, but was unable to repeat his victory of the morning.

The tournament was refereed by Ken Phillips and attracted a moderate entry of 27 due to the unfortunate clash of dates with the VETTS Western Masters.

Graham Trimming

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