

Young star Thakker makes history with double Cippenham victory

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Shae Thakker in action at the Cippenham Club Championships

Shae Thakker became the youngest ever winner of the Open Singles title at the Cippenham Table Tennis Club championships at the age of 11.

He came out on top in an entry of 15, against players from the club's British League and senior Maidenhead League teams, beating three of the four seeds en route to the title.

In the group stage, Andrew Sullivan and Saikat Ghosh were disposed of fairly easily but then Shae came up against the more experienced top seed Steve Smith. With only one player progressing into the semi-finals it was a vitally important match which Shae won 3-1 after recovering from a first-game loss. The other three seeds, Simon Vine, Ricky Hardcastle and Graham Trimming all came safely through their groups.

The semi-final pitted Shae against defending champion Hardcastle. Shae showed his immense promise with a clear 3-0 win and that set him up for the final against Vine, who had defeated Trimming by a similar score in the other semi-final.

The final itself was a gruelling five-game epic that moved one way then the other. Shae took the first game 11-9 only for Simon, who has made a very successful return to competitive table tennis this season after more than two decades out, to hit back 11-7, 11-7. The youngster was not finished, however, and won the fourth in a canter 11-3. In the fifth game Shae was always slightly ahead and eventually won 11-7.

Two weeks ago Shae also won the Junior Singles and now becomes only the second player ever to win the main event and the Junior Singles at the Club Championships in the same season. The other was Gareth Herbert in both 1995 and 1996, who went on to have an illustrious career playing for England which culminated in two gold medals at the Commonwealth Games of 2002.

The tournament was ably organised by Naomi Hayes.



Shae Thakker and Simon Vine with their medals

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