



Inaugural Cippenham 4-Star is a huge success

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Cippenham Table Tennis Club staged its first ever 4-star open tournament over the weekend and it proved an enormous success. A huge entry, with many having been turned away for the Sunday because the day was over-subscribed, produced some breathtaking table tennis, a great deal of sportsmanship and kept nine tables busy for 20 hours over the two days. Over 170 players took part and over 400 individual matches were completed.

The star of the whole weekend was, without doubt, Jonny McMullan and yet the young Hampshire boy did not win a title. McMullan powered his way to both finals, cadets on the Saturday and juniors on the Sunday. Yet he was seeded third in the cadets and as the nineteenth highest ranked player in the juniors, was well outside the seedings for that event.



Cadet Boy's finalists: Jonny McMullan & Naphong Boonyaprapa

From a local perspective the spotlight fell on 14-years old Jemma Walker. Walker reached the final of the Cadet Girls' Singles on Saturday and then surpassed that achievement by reaching the semi-final of the Junior Girls' Singles on Sunday. Walker has been in great form since the end of last season and been easily the most consistent player for Cippenham in the Junior British league and more recently the Women's British League.



Junior Girls: Zahna Hall & Stephanie Cross

Only the Junior Boys' Singles was won by the top seed, all three other events were won by the second seeds with the top seeds failing to make the finals. As is so often the case with open tournaments at Cippenham, one of the titles found a home down the M4 in Wales. Callum Evans, ranked number one junior and number four in the senior men's list in Wales, was a clearly the best player in the event, dropping just three games en route to the title. Evans emerged from his preliminary round group and then dispatched Marc Castro, Ryszard Pelc, and Naphat Boonyaprapa before meeting Ben Foster in the semi-final. Foster, the seventh seed, had also enjoyed a good run to that stage, beating amongst others Eren Gozcu and fourth seed Omar Khassal.



Callum Evans

Meanwhile, in the bottom half of the draw, Jonny McMullan was plundering his way through to the final. After his group, McMullan beat the higher ranked Matthew Daish in the second round and then surpassed that by eliminating the fifth seed Liam Grant in the third round. McMullan's quarter-final opponent, Finn Morgan-Bayliss, was also higher ranked and for this match McMullan had to pull out all the stops. After winning the first two games with some comfort, Morgan-Bayliss fought back to square the match 2-2 only for McMullan to win the fifth game by the narrow margin of 11-9. Sixth seed Ben Cawston was McMullan's victim, three-straight, in the semi-final but the final was a step too far and despite taking the first game to deuce, it was Evans who ran out a worthy winner 3-0.



Jonny McMullan

As if to balance out the McMullan family fortunes, it was a disappointing day for the top seed in the Junior Girls' Singles, Letitia McMullan. The balance of the draw became affected as both the third and fourth seeds were defeated in their preliminary round groups and were therefore displaced in the draw for the knock-out stages. One such casualty was Amy Blagborough. She lost to Anna Hursey at the group stage and therefore faced top seed McMullan as early as the second round. McMullan came through this one, after a titanic struggle which finished 12-10 in the fifth. McMullan survived one more round against Holly Holder before losing 3-0 in the semi-final to the unseeded Stephanie Cross. Cross, herself, had only just survived against Amelia Chan in the second round, having had to come from 2-1 down.



Zahna Hall

The other seed to be defeated in the groups was Tiana Dennison. The fourth seed was beaten by Yasmine Al-Amrie and therefore found herself up against second seed Zahna Hall in the second round of the knock-out. Dennison led 2-1 at one stage and came close to rediscovering her path back to the later stages. However, Hall came through that one and then did not drop another game as she went on to the final via Beth Richards and Jemma Walker and in the final was too strong for Stephanie Cross winning 11-4, 11-6, 11-6.



Jemma Walker

Jemma Walker was Cippenham's hero throughout the weekend. Winning her group earned her a match against her Cippenham team-mate Shristi Ghosh. This she won comfortably and then faced Amy Blagborough's conqueror Anna Hursey. Walker won the first game of that quarter-final before Hursey had to retire through injury.



Naphat Boonyaprapa

Naphat Boonyaprapa was the winner of the Cadet Boys' Singles and he took the title with some ease, dropping only one game all day. That game came in the last sixteen when Vincent Cheung had the temerity to snatch a solitary game at deuce. Otherwise, it was all plain sailing for the Nottinghamshire player. After easing through his group, Boonyaprapa, the second seed, defeated Uther Kingdom and Vincent Cheung and that set up a quarter-final with his brother Naphong. Winning that put Naphat into a semi-final encounter with fourth seed Sam Chesterman.



Junior Boys' Singles: Callum Evans & Jonny McMullan

All four top seeded players made their allotted positions in the semi-finals as in the top half of the draw. Number one seed Jamie Liu then came up against Jonny McMullan. The diminutive and highly talented Liu from Reading won the first game but McMullan hit back to win the next three. The final was straight-forward for Boonyaprapa who ran out an easy 11-7, 11-4, 11-5 winner against player of the tournament McMullan.



Cadet Girls' Singles: Amelia Chan & Jemma Walker

The Cadet Girls' Singles had kicked off the whole event on Saturday morning and was not without its shocks. First seed to falter was Lydia John, beaten in the group stage by Jasmine Williams. The displaced third seed then went out of the knock-out when beaten by Lara Whitton. A bigger shock followed in the second round with the departure of top seed Tiana Dennison, beaten by Beth Richards. Cippenham's Jemma Walker was in the same half as Whitton and Richards and promptly beat them both in succession to secure a place in the final.

The bottom half of the draw was dominated by second seed Amelia Chan who, in reaching the final, beat Nina Kadir and Anna Hursey. The final also belonged to Chan although Jemma Walker did give the home supporters something to cheer when she delayed the finale by taking the third game.

It took a volunteer workforce of well over twenty people to stage this tournament and special thanks are due to Steve Smith (Referee), Mike Atkinson (Organiser & Deputy Referee), Ken Phillips (Entries Secretary, Jan Chapman (Umpires' Coordinator), Dave and Elena Tant plus Simon Vine (checking in), Graham Trimming (Press and Photography) and the sixteen umpires who gave up their time to support this venture and without whom it could have happened..

Results:

Junior Boys' Singles
 Junior Girls' Singles
 Cadet Boys' Singles
 Cadet Girls' Singles
 Junior Boys' Plate
 Junior Girls' Plate
 Cadet Boys' Plate
 Cadet Girls' Plate

Winner:

Callum Evans (WAL)
 Zahna Hall (Mi)
 Naphat Boonyaprapa (Ng)
 Amelia Chan (Mi)
 Dan Clarke (Ch)
 Nina Kadir (Av)
 Ryan Darwen (Sx)
 Medha Verma (Sy)

Runner-up:

Jonny McMullan (Ha)
 Stephanie Cross (E)
 Jonny McMullan (Ha)
 Jemma Walker (Bu)
 Carl Breindel (He)
 Sarah James (E)
 Joe Kaye (Mi)
 Yasmine Al-Amrie (MI)

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