



Leicester & District: Finalists decided in Memorial Trophy

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Traditionally at this time of the year locally table tennis moves to individual play and to the Phil Reid Memorial Trophy so ably organised by Andy Wright.

Reid, a former stalwart of the sport in Leicestershire, held many administrative posts throughout his life and was commissioned at one point by the English Table Tennis Association to write a book about Victor Barna, arguably the greatest player of all time.

The first stage of this handicapped competition, comprising 10 groups, has been completed with some outstanding performances and all ranges of abilities moving through to contest the final stages which will be two all-play-all groups of five and the two winners playing off.

Group One during the first evening saw everything come down to the final match when Adam Pettitt faced Tracey Smith needing to win 2-0 to clinch a place in the finals. Pettitt won 2-1 (8-21, 21-15, 21-15) but that first game loss gave his opponent the place by the slenderest of margins. Earlier, Pettitt had given eight points per game to Scott Morris and lost in three sets.

Fahed Sacoor took himself back to 1988 when he was one of the players the first time table tennis was featured in the Olympics. Forward to Group Two and Sacoor won all his sets including a nailbiter against his nearest rival, Steve White receiving five, 2-1 (25-23, 19-21, 21-19).

Dave Small had the perfect start in Group Three by defeating Dan Woolman in two despite giving away six per game, and he eventually finished well ahead of the others. Spare a thought for the highest graded player in the competition, Karen Smith, who gave points to everyone, not least of all 11 per game to Small, a Division Two league player.

Groups Five and Six were won relatively easily with Richard Martin in sparkling form in the former, his closest set coming against Alec Downes, making a comeback to table tennis after several years' retirement from the sport. In Five, Harry White was through before playing his last set but still squeezed home 22-20 in the final game against Russell Pettitt.

The second evening saw a terrific tussle in Group Six when Rod Pickering finally just got the verdict after a countback. But he cannot make the finals so it was Steve Pratt who will move through in his place. Pratt had lost to Pickering but won his other three including the decider against Aman Rashid 2-1 (18-21, 21-16, 22-20).

Max Huggins lost his first game to Rayan Kotecha in Group Seven but then played brilliantly to take the next two 21-10, 21-6 on the way to winning overall. Meanwhile, Peter Wilson took his excellent form thus far this season into Group Eight and won all his sets 2-0 and never looked troubled.

Group Nine was the closest of the lot with just four players in this and three of them finishing 2-1. In the end it was John Genovese progressing through due to two 2-0 victories to give him a superior games average over Jinious Sheth and Eddie Kwok. Genovese lost to Kwok in three games and it was that winning game which proved to be decisive.

Finally, Group 10 saw something unprecedented in Andy Wright the organiser's eyes in that it appears to be the first time a group has had completely 2-0 sets results. Not one of them needed a deciding third game as young cadet, Kinar Sheth, did easily enough to power her way to the finals. This has not happened in more than 10 years of Wright being involved in the event.

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