A day and knight to remember at Jack Petchey team finals

Author: Paul Stimpson

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London Academy were double winners but seven different schools took home a trophy from a brilliant Jack Petchey London Schools Table Tennis Team Finals.

Sir Jack Petchey himself – newly knighted in the New Year's Honours, was there to personally congratulate all the competitors, as was Team GB disability ace Daniel Bullen.

The Under-19 Boys and Under-13 Boys were the two trophies heading back to London Academy, and they won both at a canter.

In the older age group, they won three of their four matches 8-0 in the round-robin event. Only runners-up Harefield Academy took matches off the champions, but were unable to prevent a 6-2 defeat.

The younger event saw the squad of Alexey Aliji, Valerio Bucci, Skikhar Pandey and Mojtaba Adel in imperious form, only dropping matches – two of them – to Wallington County Grammar in the semi-finals and proving too strong for Ernest Bevin College in the final.

There were two thrilling finals in the boys' events, none more so than in the Under-11s, where Ashburnham Primary and Whitgift drew 4-4.

Harry Derecki put Ashburnham one up, but Whitgift won the next three. However, the 3-2 scorelines were to prove crucial later on.

Ashburnham levelled at 3-3 but Lewis Dang beat Abed Rahman to put Whitgift back in front. Mohammed Kaba then won it for Ashburnham with a 3-1 victory over Billy Gee, making the countback score 16-13.

Ashburnham, whose squad also included Boubacar Stanley and William Nemeth-Andersen, also needed countback to beat Highgate Junior School in the semis.

Action from one of the matches. Picture by Liam Smith

In the Under-16s, Morpeth School shaded it 5-3 against Whitgift.

England Youth Squad player James Smith gave Whitgift the lead but Morpeth won the next three.

Smith came from 2-1 down to beat Jamie Dignum 3-2 (8-11, 11-4, 7-11, 11-8, 11-7) to narrow the gap and complete an unbeaten personal day, but Rijul Roychoudhury put one hand on the trophy for Morpeth by defeating Jason Kwok.

Reiss Vydelingum's win over Anthony Lynch gave Whitgift hope, but Murhad Hussain saw off Issac Fung and clinched the title for Morpeth.

The finals of the girls' events also had their share of drama, particularly in the under-13s, where St James' Catholic High were pushed by Holland Park Academy before recording a 5-3 win. The winning squad was Patricia Ianau, Natalia Ianau, Karen Boadu and Julia Fordon.

Burlington Danes took the Under-16s by beating Capital City Academy 6-2, reversing the result from the qualifying event. The squad was Yassmine Al-Amrie, Demi Reid, Aimey Gerald and Hannah Buckley-Smith.

The Under-11s was a round-robin event won in great style by Fox Primary, who beat all opposition 8-0. Barnes Primary were runners-up.

The Fox squad comprised Rose Bourdier, Valentina Weinstein, Nadia Zoppos, Colette Fransolet and Louis Pradayrol.

In the winner-take-all match between the only two entries in the Under-19s, Harefield Academy's team of Danielle Kelly, Zahna Hall, Aurora Partridge and Rachel Stone beat Royal Russell 7-1 to take the title.

Wheelchair athlete Bullen, the School Games champion, was impressed by what he saw at the University of East London's Sports Dock.

"It's good to see so many youngsters player and the standard is better than I expected," he said.

"I've learned a lot about the Jack Petchey Foundation today. It's amazing what he's done."

Local MP Stephen Timms also called in and helped to present the prizes. He said: “I’m a long-time friend of the Jack Petchey Foundation, which does a great job supporting young people across London.

“This is a very impressive event, to have 160 young people from all over London playing at a very high standard, it’s a very enjoyable event to watch.”

Results

Under-19 Boys
Round-robin: London Academy (winners), Harefield Academy (runners-up)
Under-19 Girls
Harefield Academy 7-1 Royal Russell School
Under-16 Boys
Morpeth School 5-3 Whitgift School
Under-16 Girls
Burlington Danes Academy 6-2 Capital City Academy
Under-13 Boys
London Academy 8-0 Ernest Bevin College
Under-13 Girls
St James’ Catholic High School 5-3 Holland Park Academy
Under-11 Boys
Ashburnham Primary School 4-4 Whitgift School (Ashburnham Primary win on countback)
Under-11 Girls
Round-robin: Fox Primary (winners), Barnes Primary School (runners-up)

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