



## Colchester Closed: Collins celebrates hat-trick

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With the Colchester & District Table Tennis League drawing to a close this season, all attention was focused on the Closed Tournament held at Holmwood House School over the weekend of 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> March.

The concluding event of the evening, the Men's Singles final, saw Jake Collins (Gt Horkesley A) become men's champion of Colchester for the third time in a row. Ranked 113 in England and the No 1 seed, the pressure was on for Collins to show what talent he had if he wanted to make it three straight titles.

Collins' first match of "finals night" looked to be a challenge as he came up against 1986 Men's Singles champion, Richard Hutchinson, in the first semi-final. The match had a bit more spice to it as both players were from Gt Horkesley A, and it was Collins who took the first set 14-12.

The match started off slowly but the players then found their feet and started playing more impressive shots. Collins was too strong for Hutchinson in the second set and won it 11-7. The number three seed's blocking was more effective in the third set, however Collins' attacking shots were too much for Hutchinson, winning the set 12-10 and progressing to another final.

Collins' opponent was to either be Andy Warner (Tollgate A) or Rik James (Rowhedge B), in what was a repeat of last year's semi-final. James beat Warner in straight sets last year and he probably thought it was going to be another three-set victory after racing into a 2-0 lead. However, Warner started to relax more to see if this would help his game and made fewer mistakes, winning the third set 11-9. At 9-9 in the fourth set, Warner dug deep to win the next two points, taking the match into a deciding set. It wasn't to be though as James stood firm and took the fifth 11-8, setting up a repeat of last year's final against Collins.

James was seeking to gain revenge over Collins and win his first Men's Singles title since winning it in 2005. However, it was Collins who started playing more aggressively from the start, causing James to defend from the back of the court. He took the first set 11-6.

James began to block a lot faster in the second set with more topspin added to his shots, but it was Collins who

found himself with a 2-0 lead after winning the set 11-7. The No 1 seed continued to impress and proved to be too strong for James, winning 11-9 in the third set after James made an unforced error off the champion elect's serve.

Collins will be looking to become the first ever player in Colchester to win four straight Men's Singles titles when he comes back to defend his crown next year.

In the Ladies' Singles final, Jane Li (Tollgate A) was hoping to follow in the footsteps of Collins by also winning her third straight title. Her opponent this year was Gracie Edwards (Rowhedge E) and was a first for the Colchester Closed Tournament; it was the first ever Ladies' Singles final where both players contesting it were juniors.

Edwards started the brighter of the two, racing into a 10-6 lead, but Li found a way to win the next few points and took the first set 13-11. Another close set followed, and with most rallies not lasting more than a few shots at a time, both players tried to play more offensively. Li won the second set 12-10 to lead the match 2-0.

After having set points in both of the first two sets, Edward's confidence had dropped and the mistakes began to appear in her game. Li could sense this and started playing more freely. This helped her to take the third set 11-3, becoming Ladies' Singles champion for the third consecutive year.



Jane Li

The Junior Boys' Singles final featured the reigning champion, Sam Hume (St James A), and another talented youngster who has come through the ranks in the past couple of years, Jared Chelski (Rowhedge I).

Chelski was playing in his first final's night and started the match nervously, which Hume used to his advantage to win the first set 11-7. Hume won the second set more comfortably 11-4, although this did not actually reflect how many more points Chelski could have won if some of his forehand smashes had not narrowly missed the table. Chelski relaxed a lot more in the third set and started to play more positively. However, experience prevailed and Hume won the third set 11-8 to become Junior Boys' Singles champion for the second year running.



Sam Hume

There was another repeat of one of last year's finals and that came in the Mixed Doubles. Andy Warner & Gracie Edwards were hoping to beat the defending champions, Colin Stallwood & Annabelle Rodriguez, but got off to a bad start by losing the first set 9-11. This made Warner/Edwards change their tactics slightly and they began to play more offensively in the second set, winning it 11-7.

It was a lot closer in the third set, with Stallwood/Rodriguez taking the set 15-13. Warner/Edwards took the match to a deciding set after winning the fourth 11-5. At the changeover in the fifth set, Stallwood/Rodriguez were leading 5-1. Nevertheless, Warner/Edwards brought the set back to 5-5 with patience and some good shots. Rodriguez played a foul serve at 8-10 to give Warner/Edwards an 11-8 victory in the fifth set and become Mixed Doubles champions.

In a match that featured the Men's Singles finalists, the Men's Doubles final looked to be a close contest on paper. It was played between Rik James & Gary Cattermole (Rowhedge) and Jake Collins & Paul Broxton (Gt Horkesley), with Collins/Broxton winning the first set 11-9 after playing a variety of offensive and defensive shots. Collins/Broxton looked a lot more comfortable in the second set and won it 11-5. The Gt Horkesley pairing played the third set much the same and never looked like they were going to lose it. They won it 11-7 to claim the Men's Doubles title for the first time.

The Ladies' Doubles final featured last year's winners, Gracie Edwards & Jane Li, as well as the most successful Ladies' Singles winner, Sue Welham (Tollgate B). Edwards/Li won the first set 11-9, but may have thought they



were rather fortuitous with Edwards making several unforced errors. The second set had a lot less mistakes and Edwards/Li came out on top, winning it 11-5. They also won the third set 11-8 to retain the Ladies' Doubles title.

The only remaining match of finals night was the Veteran's 40+ between losing Men's Singles semi-finalists, Andy Warner and Richard Hutchinson. Hutchinson's main tactic in the first set looked as though he wanted to play the ball from side-to-side to make Warner move. This turned out to be extremely effective and stopped Warner playing his natural hitting game, with Hutchinson winning the set 12-10.

Both players' serve was key in the second set, with several points being won on it. Hutchinson marginally took the set 11-9. Warner built up a huge lead in the third set, but Hutchinson somehow managed to claw his way back into it. However, Warner prevailed and eventually won it 11-9. The fourth set was even closer and Warner came out on top, winning 14-12 after Hutchinson wasted three match points to win the title.

The match went to a deciding set and Warner lead 5-2 at the change of ends. He then extended his lead to 9-4 lead and looked certain for an extremely impressive comeback from 0-2 down in sets. Hutchinson then relaxed and started letting Warner make the errors. He won the next seven points to win the Veteran's 40+ title 11-9 in the fifth.

The other competitions took place on the Saturday and included some very close victories. Andy Warner added to his trophy collection by beating Charlie Fulcher (Tollgate B) in four sets to win the Veterans' 50+. Ian Whiteside (Pegasus A) won the Veterans' 60+ title by beating Martin Edwards (Rowhedge E) 11-4 in a deciding set.



Gracie Edwards

Gracie Edwards was the most successful player over the course of the weekend, winning a further two titles. In a "rehearsal" for the Ladies' Singles final, Edwards beat Jane Li to pick up the Junior Girls' Single trophy. She also defeated the beaten Junior Boys' finalist in five sets, Jared Chelski, to win the Cadet Singles. However, Edwards

was not able to add the Junior Doubles title to her name as she and Chelski lost to Sam Hume and Li in four sets.

Adam Cuthbert (Rowhedge) was in fine form, beating Chris Brook (Rowhedge D) in the final of the Division One Singles. One thing to note is both these players were unseeded in that particular competition. Mark Glenister (Rowhedge G) defeated the No 1 seed in the Division Two Singles, Tom Elder (Tollgate D), to add to his Division Four Singles title he won last year. Before playing in the Junior Boys' Singles final, Jared Chelski had already won the Division Three Singles, beating Lewis Bardell (Rowhedge H) in five sets. Last but not least, Toby Deng (Tollgate F) beat Callum Wilkinson (Tollgate F) to win the Division Four Singles.

## Results

<b>Event</b>	<b>Winner(s)</b>	<b>Runner(s)-up</b>
<i>Cadet Singles</i>	Gracie Edwards	Jared Chelski
<i>Junior Boy's Singles</i>	Sam Hume	Jared Chelski
<i>Junior Girl's Singles</i>	Gracie Edwards	Jane Li
<i>Junior Doubles</i>	Sam Hume & Jane Li	Jared Chelski & Gracie Edwards
<i>Division One Singles</i>	Adam Cuthbert	Chris Brook
<i>Division Two Singles</i>	Mark Glenister	Tom Elder
<i>Division Three Singles</i>	Jared Chelski	Lewis Bardell
<i>Division Four Singles</i>	Toby Deng	Callum Wilkinson
<i>Veterans 40+</i>	Richard Hutchinson	Andy Warner
<i>Veterans 50+</i>	Andy Warner	Charlie Fulcher
<i>Veterans 60+</i>	Ian Whiteside	Martin Edwards
<i>Men's Singles</i>	Jake Collins	Rik James
<i>Men's Doubles</i>	Jake Collins & Paul Broxton	Rik James & Gary Cattermole
<i>Ladies' Singles</i>	Jane Li	Gracie Edwards
<i>Ladies' Doubles</i>	Jane Li & Gracie Edwards	Sue Welham & Hazel Hume
<i>Mixed Doubles</i>	Andy Warner & Gracie Edwards	Colin Stallwood & Annabelle Rodriguez

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