



Jarvis and Tsaptsinos take the titles on dramatic day

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Posted On: March 19, 2016

Tom Jarvis and Maria Tsaptsinos are Under-21 National Champions after a pulsating day at the PG Mutual National Championships.

The pair beat Helshan Weerasinghe and Tin-Tin Ho respectively to take the titles at Hatfield today – Tsaptsinos in dramatic and emotional circumstances following a medical timeout on match point.

Meanwhile, the top seeds are all safely through to the latter stages of the singles and doubles contests as we prepare for semi-finals, finals – and live coverage on ITV4 – on Sunday.

The England Leopards trio of Paul Drinkhall, Liam Pitchford and Sam Walker are all into the Men's Singles semi-finals, alongside 16-year-old Tom Jarvis, while top seed Kelly Sibley and Tin-Tin Ho are also safely into the last four of the Women's Singles.

The Para competitions produced some exciting events, with Jack Hunter-Spivey and Sue Gilroy winning the two wheelchair classes, Ross Wilson the class 6-8 men's and Kim Daybell the class 9-10 men's.

The Men's Doubles final tomorrow – the first of three finals to be shown live on on ITV4 from 3pm – will see Paul Drinkhall & Liam Pitchford face Mike O'Driscoll & Chris Doran.

It will be followed by the Women's Singles and Men's Singles finals.

In the Women's Doubles, Tin-Tin Ho & Maria Tsaptsinos will play Karina Le Fevre & Emma Vickers. Sunday kicks off with the Mixed Doubles semi-finals.

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Under-21 Women's Singles

In the most dramatic circumstances imaginable, Maria Tsaptsinos took the title following a medical timeout on match point after a heavy fall.

The 18-year-old Berkshire player won the first game, but 17-year-old Ho the next three. Ho had a match point in the fifth but Tsaptsinos came back to win it and take the next to send the match into a decider. It was high-class stuff but a mere prelude, as it turned out, to the drama to follow.

She had her first match point at 10-9 – saved by Ho. Then, diving to return a wide ball on the next point Tsaptsinos fell heavily, hurting her back.

In obvious pain, she had no alternative but to call the timeout. And when she returned to the fray, every movement produced a wince. Somehow, though, she won the next three points before a low key and tearful ending, with both players understandably emotional and unsure how to react. The fact they both retained a good proportion of poise and dignity speaks volumes for their respective characters.

The final scoreboard read 4-3 in Tsaptsinos' favour – 12-10, 8-11, 8-11, 6-11, 13-11, 11-8, 13-11.

Tsaptsinos said: "Weird is one way to describe how it feels. It would feel amazing if I hadn't had the injury and I want to apologise to Tin-Tin for keeping her for 10 minutes.

"I think I played quite well before that, probably some of my best table tennis. I'm happy, but not ecstatic."

Ho said: "It's difficult if you see someone get hurt but you could say I shouldn't have let it affect me that much. It was a really good match."

What went before in the competition pales by comparison. For the record, reigning champion Ho overcame Emma Torkington 4-1 (11-7, 11-5, 6-11, 11-7, 11-5) in her semi-final.

Tsaptsinos also secured her place in the final with a 4-1 scoreline – 11-6, 11-6, 10-12, 11-7, 11-5 against Emily Bolton.

Under-21 Men's Singles

Tom Jarvis declared it "my best day in table tennis" as he followed up his run into the Men's Singles semi-finals by taking the younger age group title.

His final victory was by a 4-1 margin over Helshan Weerasinghe, though the latter led 1-0 and had chances to lead 2-1 in another high-quality encounter.

In the end, Jarvis won more of the key points to seal a 4-1 (10-12, 11-8, 12-10, 11-8, 11-5) victory and add the title to his previous age group accolades.

The champion said: "I'm absolutely over the moon. I knew I'd have to dig in and I had a difficult match against Alex Ramsden so I was happy to come out of that.

"I was thinking before I went in to win the under-21s and get a medal in the men's singles and I did it – there's no better feeling you could have. I think this is the biggest table tennis day of my life."

The match he was referring to against Ramsden was an epic semi-final, the pair's second meeting of the day, which he took 4-3 (11-8, 10-12, 13-11, 10-12, 8-11, 11-6, 11-8).

Weerasinghe defeated Liam McTiernan 4-1 (11-9, 13-11, 11-2, 8-11, 11-9) in his semi-final.

McTiernan had earlier staged a superb comeback to overcome Jack Bennett 4-3 (6-11, 6-11, 6-11, 12-10, 11-8, 11-6, 11-6) in one of the matches of the event.

Para Events



Sue Gilroy receives her gold medal from Karen Tonge MBE (picture by Alan Man)

No fewer than eight of the Rio Paralympics GB squad featured across four round-robin events as para table tennis shared the platform of the PG Mutual Nationals.

Two of those 2016 Paralympians-in-waiting won the wheelchair events, Sue Gilroy seeing off Megan Shackleton and Jane Campbell, while Jack Hunter-Spivey overcame Daniel Bullen, Nicko Anderson and Kevin Plowman.

Hunter-Spivey said: "It feels brilliant. I've had some tough matches, it's a tough field. To come in and battle like that, I'm very proud of my performance.

"I think it's amazing to be part of this event. This is the best way to grow para sport and for people to take notice of it."

Gilroy said: "It's really good. I played a lot better than at our Nationals a couple of weeks ago. I'd like to have played more matches and it would be great in future for the two Nationals to be totally equal."

In the men's class 9-10, Kim Daybell came out on top against Craig Allen, Ashley Facey Thompson and Shae Thakker.

Daybell had earlier reached the quarter-finals of the Men's Singles and he said: "I've had a really good day. I think it's a good chance to showcase all the different players because I don't think a lot of people know who the

players are who are going to Rio. Hopefully it's something we can do more often."

And in the men's class 6-8, between four Rio squad members, Ross Wilson took the gold ahead of Will Bayley, Aaron McKibbin and David Wetherill.

The winner's reaction was: "It feels really good – they are my team-mates as well, so it makes it a bit harder because we know each other's games so well.

"The other players here have a lot of respect for para table tennis and the hard work we put in, and we have mutual respect for them."

Men's Singles

Top seed Paul Drinkhall is safely through to tomorrow's semi-final after triumphing 4-1 (11-9, 11-9, 14-16, 11-7, 11-3) in an entertaining encounter with fifth seed David McBeath.

Drinkhall will take on 16-year-old Tom Jarvis after the eighth seed defeated Kim Daybell 4-1 (11-5, 8-11, 11-9, 11-3, 12-10).

Sam Walker and Liam Pitchford will contest tomorrow's other semi-final after they overcame Chris Doran and Adam Nutland respectively.

Pitchford recovered from a game down to triumph 4-1 (12-14, 11-3, 11-7, 11-5, 11-3) while Walker recorded an impressive 4-0 (11-2, 13-11, 11-3, 11-6) win.

Earlier, Paralympic ace Daybell recorded one of the shock results of the day as he defeated 10th seed Helshan Weerasinghe 4-3 (5-11, 13-11, 6-11, 11-5, 11-6, 9-11, 11-3).

Nutland beat George Downing in a seven-game thriller, 4-3 (5-11, 11-2, 11-5, 11-4, 5-11, 5-11, 11-9).

Eighth seed Jarvis came from 2-1 down to overcome Alex Ramsden 4-2 (8-11, 11-9, 5-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-8) and Michael O'Driscoll took the opening game but succumbed 4-1 (9-11, 11-5, 11-6, 11-5, 11-8) to second seed Pitchford.

Elsewhere, Drinkhall breezed past Gabriel Achampong 4-0 (11-6, 11-4, 11-5, 11-5), while fellow-World Championship bronze medallist Walker was equally untroubled as he saw off Lorestas Trumpauskas, also 4-0 (11-5, 11-8, 11-6, 11-9).

McBeath and Doran had progressed 4-1 and 4-0 against Danny Lawrence and Craig Bryant respectively.

Women's Singles

Maria Tsaptsinos and Tin-Tin Ho will meet for the second time in these championships when they face-off in tomorrow's semi-final.

The other semi will be between reigning champion Kelly Sibley and fourth seed Hannah Hicks.

Tsaptsinos defeated Emily Bolton 4-1 (12-10, 11-3, 7-11, 11-7, 11-9), while Ho overcame Emma Torkington, also 4-1 (11-8, 11-3 11-9, 3-11, 11-5).

Hicks breezed to a 4-0 (11-8, 11-5, 11-3, 11-5) win over 15-year-old Denise Payet while Sibley came from 2-1 down to defeat Karina Le Fevre 4-2 (11-6, 10-12, 8-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-7).

The result of the first round was ninth seed Torkington coming from 2-1 down to surprise sixth seed Emma Vickers 4-2 (11-7, 4-11, 8-11, 11-5, 13-11, 11-9).

At the same stage, Payet overcame Lois Peake, four years her senior, 4-0 (14-12, 11-4, 11-5, 11-7).

Second seed Ho lost a total of only 14 points on her way to defeating Kate Hughes 4-0 (11-3, 11-4, 11-1, 11-6), while her semi-final opponent Tsaptsinos was also untroubled, winning 4-0 against Kate Cheer (11-8, 11-5, 11-5, 11-4).

Hicks saw off Emma Tovey 4-0, Karina Le Fevre was a 4-1 winner over Evangeline Collier and Bolton defeated Sophie Neil, also 4-1.

Men's Doubles

Liam Pitchford & Paul Drinkhall's quest for a fourth successive title is on course as they set up a final against Chris Doran & Mike O'Driscoll.

The top seeds won their quarter-final in three straight against Craig Bryant and Lorestas Trumpauskas but did not have things all their own way in their semi-final against Alex Ramsden & Luke Savill.

The teenage pair took the first game and had a point to force a decider before succumbing 3-1 (8-11, 11-4, 11-8, 12-10).

It was the same pattern for Doran & O'Driscoll as they beat Alim Hirji & Emran Hussain 3-0 and then needed four in the semis against Helshan Weerasinghe & Danny Lawrence before prevailing 11-7, 11-7, 8-11, 11-8.

Women's Doubles

Defending champions Tin-Tin Ho & Maria Tsapsinos will face Karina Le Fevre & Emma Vickers in tomorrow's final as they look to secure their second successive title.

Ho & Tsapsinos cruised through their quarter-final, defeating Charlotte Bardsley & Sophie Barlow 3-0 (11-8, 11-6, 11-5), before overcoming Letitia McMullan and Mollie Patterson 3-1 (11-5, 11-7, 9-11, 11-5) in the semi.

Le Fevre and Vickers dropped the first game but came back to defeat Kate Hughes & Naomi Jackson 3-1 (7-11, 11-3, 11-1, 11-4) in their quarter-final, before taking a marathon first game 21-19 on their way to defeating Kate Cheer and Denise Payet 3-0 (21-19, 11-5, 11-9).

Mixed Doubles

Defending champions Sam Walker & Tin-Tin Ho are safely into the mixed doubles semi-finals after overcoming Matthew Ware & Karina Le Fevre 3-0 (11-6, 11-9, 11-8).

Walker and Ho, who progressed through the first round with a bye, will meet Chris Doran & Hannah Hicks tomorrow morning after they saw off Michael O'Driscoll & Kate Hughes, also in three straight (11-6, 11-7, 11-9).

The morning's first semi-final will see Tom Jarvis & Maria Tsapsinos take on David McBeath & Emma Vickers.

Tsapsinos & Jarvis defeated Alex Ramsden & Kate Cheer 3-1 (11-6, 11-6, 6-11, 11-9), while McBeath & Vickers overcame Craig Bryant & Emma Tovey in three (11-8, 11-3, 11-9).

The tightest game of the day was in the first round when O'Driscoll & Hughes needed five sets to get past Jack Bennett & Lois Peake 3-2 (11-4, 9-11, 14-12, 7-11, 11-5).

Additional reporting by Sam Glanz

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