



Smith and Hall take top ESTTA titles

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James Smith and Zahna Hall took the under-19 titles on a packed day of action at the Butterfly ESTTA Individual finals.

A total of 326 players were in action at the Aldersley Leisure Village in Wolverhampton, across eight competitions in four age groups.

Under-19 Boys

Second seed beat first seed as James Smith overcame Billy Forster in a five-set final.

The 15-year-old edged a tight first set but found himself 2-1 down before coming back to win 3-2 (13-11, 4-11, 9-11, 11-6, 11-2).

Forster's participation in the final had hung by a thread in the last 16 as he trailed James Chappell 2-0. But he found his form to level and then shaded the decider to complete his comeback 3-2 (4-11, 6-11, 11-7, 11-7, 13-11).

The quarters and semis were less complicated as he saw off Carl Baldry and Kim Fung Chan in three straight.

Smith advanced to the final by beating Lee Downing, Tom Windram and James Hobson in the knockout stages.

The winner said: "It's quite a big one to win and I'm pleased with how I played. I knew I could win if I played well, and I did play well – I'm happy to win."

Under-19 Girls

Zahna Hall added the individual title to the team trophy won last week with Harefield Academy.

The second seed – top seed and defending champion Eva Wang did not appear – came from 2-1 down to win the final against Letitia McMullan 3-2 (8-11, 11-5, 10-12, 11-9, 11-9).

McMullan also had a five-setter in the quarter-finals, seeing off Beth Farnworth 3-2 (10-12, 14-12, 11-9, 8-11, 11-4) before beating Amy Humphreys in four in the semis.

Hall had beaten Amy Hutchings in the quarter-finals and Gina Reick in four games in the semi-finals.

Hall, 17, said: "Last week I won the team event and much as I like winning that, my main goal was to get a double win."

She dedicated the win to Harefield coach Eli Baraty and said: "He's been amazing. He trains me every day, works me so hard and sorts everything out for me."

Under-16 Boys

Top seed Alex Ramsden withstood a comeback from second seed Matt Leete to take the title.

At two sets up, it looked as if he was cruising, but Leete stormed back to force it into a fifth, which Ramsden shaded to complete a win by 11-9, 11-9, 5-11, 3-11, 11-9.

Earlier, Ramsden needed four to get past Reece Chamdal in the last 16 but then breezed past Gaurav Aravind in the quarters and Cheong Kwan in the semis.

Leete was unblemished as he got past James Kelly, George Hazell and Naphat Boonyaprapa all in three straight.

Ramsden said of his first schools title: "It means a lot to me. I had to dig in to win it after being 2-0 up and him coming back."

Under-16 Girls

Second seed Gauri Duhan toppled top-ranked Charlotte Bardsley to add to the Under-13 title she won last year.

Duhan's 3-0 final victory (11-9, 11-3, 11-9) was straightforward by comparison with her last-four clash with Chloe Lingard, when she had to come from behind to take it 3-2 (9-11, 11-9, 11-13, 11-6, 11-6).

Bardsley, by contrast, had not dropped a set all day as she topped her group and then defeated Georgina Lister, Holly Johns and then Bhavika Mistry in the knockout stage – the latter by an impressive 5, 1, 5 margin in the semi-finals.

"I really wanted to win that," said 14-year-old Duhan, from Hull, "I had a tough semi-final and that got me ready for the final. I just think I played a lot better."

"I really like playing schools events. I won it last year and that was really good."

Under-13 Boys

Louis Moyes added the Under-13 title to the Under-11 crown from two years ago as he beat top seed Jamie Liu in the final.

The scoreline of 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-4) was something of an anti-climax after Norfolk player Moyes' epic semi-final victory over Josh Weatherby.

Having seen Weatherby come back from 2-0 down to level, Moyes found himself 8-0 and 10-2 up in the decider.

Incredibly, his opponent fought back to level and later held match points of his own before Moyes finally prevailed 3-2 (11-9, 11-6, 9-11, 9-11, 15-13).

Third-seeded Moyes' day might also have gone differently had he not won his decisive group match in five against Jinious Sheth.

Keeping up the five-set theme, Liu had gone the distance in the quarter-finals against Louis Price, seeing his opponent come from 2-0 down before recovering to win 3-2 (11-6, 11-4, 11-13, 4-11, 11-5). It was a bit easier in the semis, when he beat Freddie Osenton-Brown 3-0.

Moyes said: "When I beat Josh in the semi-final it boosted my confidence a bit. I needed to win that one because I wouldn't forgive myself if I lost (from 10-2 up). I got a net on match point and I felt quite bad about that.

"This is a national title, so it feels good."

Under-13 Girls

Amelia Chan took the title, coming from 2-0 down in the semi-finals and then sinking top seed Jasmin Wong in a close final.

The second seed, from Enfield, had been on the verge of elimination as she trailed 2-0 to sixth seed Gemma Kerr in the semi-finals before storming back to win 3-2 (13-15, 8-11, 11-8, 11-7, 11-5).

And the final too was a compelling battle, with Chan shading it 3-1 (17-15, 5-11, 15-13, 11-8) against the top seed.

Earlier, Chan had beaten her namesake Ruby in three in the quarter-finals, while Wong's path to the final had seen her defeat Nicole Scott 3-0 in the quarters and Darcie Proud 3-1 in the semis.

Amelia said: "I'm very happy. I thought I was going to lose in the semi-final but I calmed down a bit and came back."

Under-11 Boys

Top seed Naphong Boonyaprapa lived up to his billing as he went through the competition without dropping a game until the final.

The 11-year-old from Nottingham overcame Bradley Burgess in the quarter-finals and Bertie Kelly in the semis to set up a final against second seed Rhys Davies.

It was a high-quality encounter which drew quite a crowd and Boonyaprapa won it 3-1 (11-9, 9-11, 11-7, 11-8).

Davies had also reached the final without dropping a game, seeing off Jakub Piwowar in the quarter-finals and Joel Gibson in the last four.

Naphong (known as Poww) said: "It's good. I practiced harder than usual for this event and I tried to put more spin on my shots so it was harder for my opponents."

Under-11 Girls

Another top seed was victorious as Sophie Chiang defeated fifth seed Erin Green to take the title.

The Essex youngster had to fight for a 3-0 win which was less straightforward than at first glance, particularly in the first, before taking it 13-11, 11-8, 11-6.

Chiang was also pushed in the quarter finals, when she came from behind to defeat second seed Alana Mansfield – who had surprisingly finished runner-up in her group – 3-1 (8-11, 11-9, 11-1, 11-5). She then defeated fourth-ranked Lola McGhee in the semi-finals.

Green, who had not lost a game before the final, overcame third seed Amy Marriott in the last eight and then booked her final place by beating Lucy Vernon.

Sophie, aged 10, said: "I feel very happy. I wanted to keep calm and enjoy the day and even when I was losing I was quite calm and just did my stuff."

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