



Ireland take over Liverpool on Grand Prix day one

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The 2016/17 Grand Prix season got underway with the traditional curtain raiser in Liverpool. The bands took centre stage on Saturday at the Lifestyles Tennis Centre in Wavertree.

Day one was dominated by the Irish, with at least one player from Ireland reaching an incredible 9 out of 10 finals, winning 5 of them. Mike O'Driscoll and Megan Phillips claimed the big prizes of the day, winning the Men's and Women's Band 1 respectively.

The next two stops on this season's circuit see us visit Crawley in September and Tipton in October. You can enter both events now by following the links below.

Find out more about Crawley and enter [here](#).

Find out more about Tipton and enter [here](#).

Men's Band 1

As ever, the final match of the day was the Men's Band 1 final. Competed by Kim Daybell and Mike O'Driscoll, it was the latter that was crowned champion thanks to a 3-0 win.

O'Driscoll, seeded one, made light work of the competition, first beating Paralympian Will Bayley 3-0. Next up was Zak Wilson, this time the score line 3-1. In the semi-final he faced ever improving Welsh youngster, Callum Evans. Unfortunately for Evans, O'Driscoll's experience and knowledge of the game shone through, taking it 3-0.

Daybell, as he always seems too, battled his way through the rounds, fighting as hard as ever to reach the final. After winning group two, he played James Hobson and had to claw his way back from two down to win game eight in the decider. It wasn't any easier in the semi-final against Gavin Maguire. This time winning 5-11, 11-8, 11-7, 8-11, 12-10.



Kim Daybell [left] and Mike ODriscoll [right]

Women's Band 1

Megan Phillips got her season off to a great start by claiming the Women's Band 1 title in Liverpool. Phillips got the better of Katie McGlone in a very close 3-0 match, revenging her group defeat.

Phillips had the unfortunate task of playing off against her twin sister, Angharad in the semi-finals. On this occasion it was Megan who progressed, thanks to a 3-0 scoreline. The day didn't start so well for Megan who had to play Rachel Baker in a prelim round having finished runner-up in her group.

McGlone, who beat Megan Phillips in the groups, went straight to the main draw where she faced compatriot Emma Ludlow. It was a nervy affair that went to five, following a controversial let point at 2-1, 9-10 in the way of McGlone. After recomposing herself she finished it off 11-7 in the decider.



Katie McGlone [left] and Megan Phillips [right]

Men's Band 2

The Men's Band 2 trophy was taken home by a surprise winner in the form of Zak Wilson. It was a Scotland v Ireland final, with the player from the latter taking it 3-0 against Chris Main.

Left hander Wilson, faced a tricky tie against fellow 'lefty' James Hobson at the semi-final stage. The Yorkshireman's defensive style caused problems for Wilson who dropped the third end 11-3. However, he bounced back strongly to win the fourth and confirm his place in the final, 3-1.

Runner-up, Chris Main, was seeded one for this event and almost pulled off the performances to showcase his ranking. However, he had to settle for second best, despite earlier victories against Joel Webb 3-0 and Ben

Cawston, 3-1.



Chris Main [left] and Zak Wilson [right]

Women's Band 2

Charlotte Bardsley of Staffordshire picked up a great victory in the Women's Band 2 Singles, beating Ireland's Katie McGlone 3-0 in the final.

Perhaps a more impressive victory was Bardsley's semi-final win over Scotland's Gillian Edwards. The Scot led 2-1 before succumbing to the English youngster 11-7 in the decider. Bardsley also had a very close encounter with yet another home nation player, beating Anna Hursey of Wales 11-9, 6-11, 8-11, 11-3, 11-8 at the quarter-final stage.

McGlone's route to the final started from group one, where she beat number one seed Gillian Edwards in the match to decide who finished top. A 3-1 quarter-final win versus Zoe Cheesman, was later followed by a show of great mental strength, coming from two behind to beat Beth Farnworth in the semis.



Katie McGlone [left] and Charlotte Bardsley [right] pictured with Table Tennis England board member, Tom Purcell

Men's Band 3

Billy Shilton put Band 2 disappointment behind him to secure the Men's Band 3 title. The lad from Gloucestershire outfoxed Charlie Fitzgerald in the final winning 11-9, 11-8, 10-12, 11-2.

Third seed, Shilton, suffered a shock defeat to Matthew Stephens in the groups, meaning he had to take the harder route as runner-up. Victories against Steven Gray, Addi Duhan and Rob Owen set the young para player on his way to a semi-final meeting with Alan Pattison, which he won 3-1.

In the top half of the draw, Fitzgerald beat teammate and number one seed Conor Gallagher 3-2 at the quarter-final stage. Another mammoth match was required to force his way past a resilient Cade Short one round later. Fitzgerald winning this one 3-11, 11-9, 11-6, 8-11, 11-7.



Charlie Fitzgerald [left] and Billy Shilton [right]

Women's Band 3

Charlotte Bardsley capped a fine day by taking her second title in the Women's Band 3. On this occasion it was Mia O'Rahilly Egan, who unfortunately was on the losing end of a final – and not for the first time today.

Having won the Band 2 earlier in the day, Bardsley lined up as the hot favourite. After topping her group, Bardsley went on to record convincing 3-0 victories against Lara Whitton in the quarters and Anna Hursey in the semi-finals.

In the other half of the draw, Mia progressed well, taking down Rachael Scott 11-5, 11-2, 11-0 and then recovering from 1-0 down to beat Rebecca Plaistow 10-12, 11-8, 11-9, 11-5, in their semi-final.



Mia O'Rahilly Egan [left] and Charlotte Bardsley [right]

Men's Band 4

It was another Irish victory in the Men's Band 4, this time for Charlie Fitzgerald. He beat Jack Stockdale 3-1 to wrap up a very competitive event.

Fitzgerald, seeded sixth, topped his group to earn a last 16 match against Cade Short of Wales. After beating Short 3-1, he then went on to beat fellow countryman Alan Pattison 12-10 in the fifth. Fitzgerald was at it again one round later, this time beating Addi Duhan 11-8 in the fifth, to confirm his place in the final.

Fitzgerald's final opponent, Jack Stockdale, battled his way through the rounds and thoroughly deserved to finish in the top two. His route to the final came courtesy of 3-1 wins against Steven Gray and Martin Johnson, both of Scotland, and then a semi-final victory over Rob Owen, 3-2.



Charlie Fitzgerald [left] and Jack Stockdale [right] pictured with Table Tennis England board member, Tom Purcell

Women's Band 4

Rachael Scott came out on top of the all Irish Women's Band 4 final, beating Mia O'Rahilly Egan in five close ends.

Number one seed, Scott, confirmed her status after topping group one and then beating Welsh youngster Lara Whitton 3-2 in the semi-finals. Whitton earned herself a great victory one round prior, defeating the experienced Silvia Trenti.

It was another all Irish affair in the second semi-final as eventual runner-up O'Rahilly Egan defeated Emma McSorley 11-6, 11-4, 11-8. As winner of group three, O'Rahilly Egan faced an extra round and picked up a creditable 3-0 win over Beth Richards.



Mia O'Rahilly Egan [left] and Rachael Scott [right] pictured

with Table Tennis England board member, Tom Purcell

Men's Band 5

Ireland's Tom Davis was crowned Men's Band 5 Singles champion of the Liverpool Grand Prix courtesy of an 11-6, 13-11, 11-3 win against David Sulkowski.

Davis, who found the going tougher than he had in the morning band, scraped through his semi-final beating countryman Donie Mullally 13-11, 10-12, 11-8, 2-11, 11-6. Before this stage straight set victories were recorded against Minesh Pitamber, Ali Malloch and Adam Ridley.

Sulkowski, who himself was a surprise finalist, would have been happy with the displays that saw him reach the last two. After winning group seven, Sulkowski went on to beat David Ramsey 3-0, Shaun Ellis 3-1 and Tim Vaughan 3-0.



David Sulkowski [left] and Tom Davis [right]

Men's Band 6

Tom Davis was the first name to be announced as a champion on the 2016/17 Grand Prix series. He claimed the Men's Band 6 title after a straight sets victory against Sam Bailey.

Davis cruised through his morning band, not dropping a set from start to finish. The Irishman started with three wins out of three in his group, and then dispatched Sean Drewry, Tim Vaughan and David Sulkowski in the knock out rounds. He eventually met Sam Bailey in the final and looked comfortable throughout, winning 11-4, 12-10, 11-6.

Bailey, representing the Isle of Man, won group six as expected. It was his first knock out round match versus Donie Mullally that nearly proved to be a stumbling block. Leading 2-0 he lost the third 11-9, before regaining focus to take the fourth. 3-0 wins followed in his quarter-final and semi-final matches, beating Ryan Crowley and then David Ramsey.



Sam Bailey [left] and Tom Davis [right]

Results

Men's Band 1

Mike O'Driscoll (Y) bt Kim Daybell (Ys) 3-0 (11-8, 11-5, 12-10)

Women's Band 1

Megan Phillips (WAL) bt Katie McGlone (IRL) 3-0 (11-7, 13-11, 12-10)

Men's Band 2

Zak Wilson (IRL) bt Chris Main (SCO) 3-0 (11-9, 11-8, 12-10)

Women's Band 2

Charlotte Bardsley (St) bt Katie McGlone (IRL) 3-0 (11-6, 11-8, 11-5)

Men's Band 3

Billy Shilton (Gs) bt Charlie Fitzgerald (IRL) 3-1 (11-9, 11-8, 10-12, 11-2)

Women's Band 3

Charlotte Bardsley (St) bt Mia O'Rahilly Egan (IRL) 3-1 (9-11, 18-16, 11-8, 11-7)

Men's Band 4

Charlie Fitzgerald (IRL) bt Jack Stockdale (E) 3-1 (11-9, 7-11, 11-8, 11-8)

Women's Band 4

Rachael Scott (IRL) bt Mia O'Rahilly Egan (IRL) 3-2 (11-9, 11-13, 9-11, 12-10, 11-8)

Men's Band 5

Tom Davis (IRL) bt David Sulkowski (Ng) 3-0 (11-6, 13-11, 11-3)

Men's Band 6

Tom Davis (IRL) bt Sam Bailey (IMN) 3-0 (11-4, 12-10, 11-6)

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