



Doran and Necula Liverpool Grand Prix champions

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As the rain poured outside on day two of the Liverpool Grand Prix, Chris Doran and Iulia Necula reigned supreme in the hall. They claimed the big titles at the first Grand Prix event of the 2016/17 season.

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 Singles

Continuing from where he left off last season, Chris Doran was in majestic form to claim his third straight Grand Prix Men's Singles title (Blackpool & London in 2015/16). Doran looking to reclaim his overall title from two seasons ago already has a healthy lead over defending champion Ryan Jenkins, who was in attendance as a spectator only in Liverpool.

Doran faced an inform Mike O'Driscoll in the final and after a close couple of ends, managed to stamp his authority on the match, winning 11-9, 8-11, 11-8, 11-5.

Second seed Chris Doran made light work of his challengers in the knock out rounds. First he beat Sepehr Bidari 3-0, and then another Scotsman by the same scoreline, this time Niall Cameron on the receiving end. He did drop an end though at the quarter-final stage, losing the third to Dan O'Connell of Wales. This meant only Darius Knight stood between Doran and another final. Knight had looked sharp, earlier beating Kim Daybell three straight, but no one was stopping Doran today, the big man clinching it 11-8, 11-8, 13-11.

Player of the Weekend, Mike O'Driscoll, claimed the scalp of the tournament beating number one seed Gavin Rungay in a very closely contested quarter-final. O'Driscoll coming through 11-5, 7-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6. It didn't get

any easier for the ex-England international, who then faced Scotland's number two, Craig Howieson, in the semi's. Again it went to five, only this time the Yorkshireman had to come from behind winning 11-7 in the decider.



Mike O'Driscoll [left] and Chris Doran [right] pictured with Table Tennis England board member, Tom Purcell

Women's Singles

Iulia Necula claimed the first Women's Singles title of the new season in Liverpool, beating defending overall champion and English number one, Kelly Sibley. The former world number 141 from Romania won it 11-7, 11-7, 9-11, 11-7.

Necula looked comfortable and wasn't overly stretched as she opened up a 2-0 lead. Sibley responded by racing into a 7-0 lead in game three. It looked certain that the five time national champion would pull one back, but Necula just as quickly clawed her way back in to contention, levelling at 9-9. Sibley managed to regain focus and see the end out 11-9. In the fourth Necula always seemed to have it under control and wrapped it up 11-7, sealing the 3-1 win.

Having cruised through the groups and earlier rounds, Necula appeared unbeatable. However, she had to survive a big scare in her semi-final against Karina LeFevre, just winning it 11-9 in the decider. Necula twice led, but was pegged back both times by LeFevre who eventually missed out by the narrowest of margins.

Sibley herself was never troubled on route to yet another final. She eased through her group recording three 3-0 wins. In the first round Sibley beat Gillian Edwards 3-0, after the Scot had won her preliminary round match against Women's Band 1 champ, Megan Phillips. Sibley's semi-final opponent was familiar foe, Charlotte Carey. On this occasion it was a relatively straight forward three sets victory for Sibley.



Iulia Necula [left] and Kelly Sibley [right] pictured with Table Tennis England board member, Tom Purcell

Under 21 Men's Singles

James Hobson versus Ethan Walsh was our final match of the weekend. This time round James Hobson left the happier winning the Under 21 Men's Singles 3-0.

Arguably, Hobson's best win of the weekend came at the quarter-final stage when he beat number one seed Callum Evans 11-9, 3-11, 7-11, 11-4, 11-2. A convincing 3-0 win followed in the semi-finals against Scotland's Calum Morrison 11-2, 11-8, 11-6.

Walsh had to battle his way through the rounds, first getting past Addi Duhan 3-1. Next up was Joseph Langham-Ferreira and this time Walsh had to come back from 2-1 down to win it 3-2. His semi-final opponent was James Garrod, who put up a good fight but couldn't prevent Walsh from sealing it 3-1.



James Hobson [left] and Ethan Walsh [right]

Under 21 Women's Singles

Charlotte Bardsley concluded a very good weekend performance by taking home the Under 21 Women's Singles title. Bardsley beat Gauri Duhan 3-1 in an unexpected final line up.

Bardsley made her way through to the final thanks to three wins from three in group two. In the semi-final she beat young Welsh star Anna Hursey in very close match, prevailing 13-15, 11-5, 7-11, 11-7, 11-8.

Number one seed, Emma Ludlow, exited early going out at the group stages. Above her finished eventual runner-up Gauri Duhan and Anna Hursey. After topping the group Duhan overcame second seed Katie McGlone in a tight five set affair, 4-11, 11-7, 9-11, 14-12, 11-5.



Charlotte Bardsley [left] and Gauri Duhan [right]

Mixed Veteran Singles

Jimmy Walsh picked up a fantastic win in the Mixed Veteran Singles final, taking down serial Grand Prix winner, Tomasz Rzeszotko, three games to one.

Walsh didn't get it all his own way though, and was made to work hard. In the first round he came from one game behind to beat Andrew Frain. In his semi-final he let a 1-0 lead slip, but recovered to take it 3-1 against Steve Green.

Rzeszotko on the other hand was presented with a walkover from round one, as the preliminary winner he should have played, Samson Bekele, scratched. In the semi-final, Rzeszotko also let a one – nil lead slip, losing the second end to Rory Scott 11-8.



Jimmy Walsh [left] and Tomasz Rzeszotko [right]

Open Doubles

In a strong Open Doubles field, Gavin Rumgay and Mike O'Driscoll teamed up to claim victory. The pair were too strong for their Welsh opponents Dan O'Connell and Charlotte Carey, winning in three comfortable sets.

Rio bound Ross Wilson and Aaron McKibbin put up the best fight taking an end off the eventual champions. They went down 11-2, 10-12, 11-5, 11-6 at the semi-final stage.

In the bottom half of the draw, Carey and O'Connell picked up a very impressive result, taking down the second seeds, Craig Howieson and Gavin Maguire in five set thriller. It finished 14-12, 9-11, 10-12, 11-9, 15-13.



Charlotte Carey and Dan O'Connell [left]
and Mike O'Driscoll and Gavin Rumgay
[right]

Results

Men's Singles

Chris Doran (Np) bt Mike O'Driscoll (Y) 3-1 (11-9, 8-11, 11-8, 11-5)

Women's Singles

Iulia Necula (ROM) bt Kelly Sibley (Wa) 3-1 (11-7, 11-7, 9-11, 11-7)

Under 21 Men's Singles

James Hobson (Y) bt Ethan Walsh (He) 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-8)

Under 21 Women's Singles

Charlotte Bardsley (St) bt Gauri Duhan (Y) 3-1 (11-8, 5-11, 11-6, 11-9)

Mixed Veteran Singles

Jimmy Walsh (He) bt Tomasz Rzekoszotko (Ch) 3-1 (11-7, 8-11, 11-9, 11-7)

Open Doubles

Gavin Rumgay (SCO) & Mike O'Driscoll (Y) bt Dan O'Connell (WAL) & Charlotte Carey (WAL) 3-0 (11-5, 11-8, 11-8)

Player of the Weekend

Mike O'Driscoll (Y)



Mike O'Driscoll pictured
with Table Tennis England
board member, Tom

Purcell

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