



Dye and Roff star at reborn Essex Closed Champs

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After a gap of some eight years, the ECTTA Annual Closed Championships for Seniors, Vets and U21s returned. It was held at the Rayleigh Leisure Centre, in Rawreth, home of Southend's Annual Closed Championships.

A good entry of 68 players combined to produce a very good championships, beginning with the men's, ladies' and under-21 events on the Saturday.

In the Men's Singles semis, we saw two five-setters, with both going to the wire. In the first, Tony Halling just edged out Lukasz Lewandowski -8, -6, 6, 4, 10, but not before Lewandowski had a match point.

It was a similar story in the other semi with Josh Dye just beating Ben Warner -7, 5, 9, -9, 6. In the final it again it went all the way with Josh just taking the title from Tony -6, 8, 3, -9, 8.

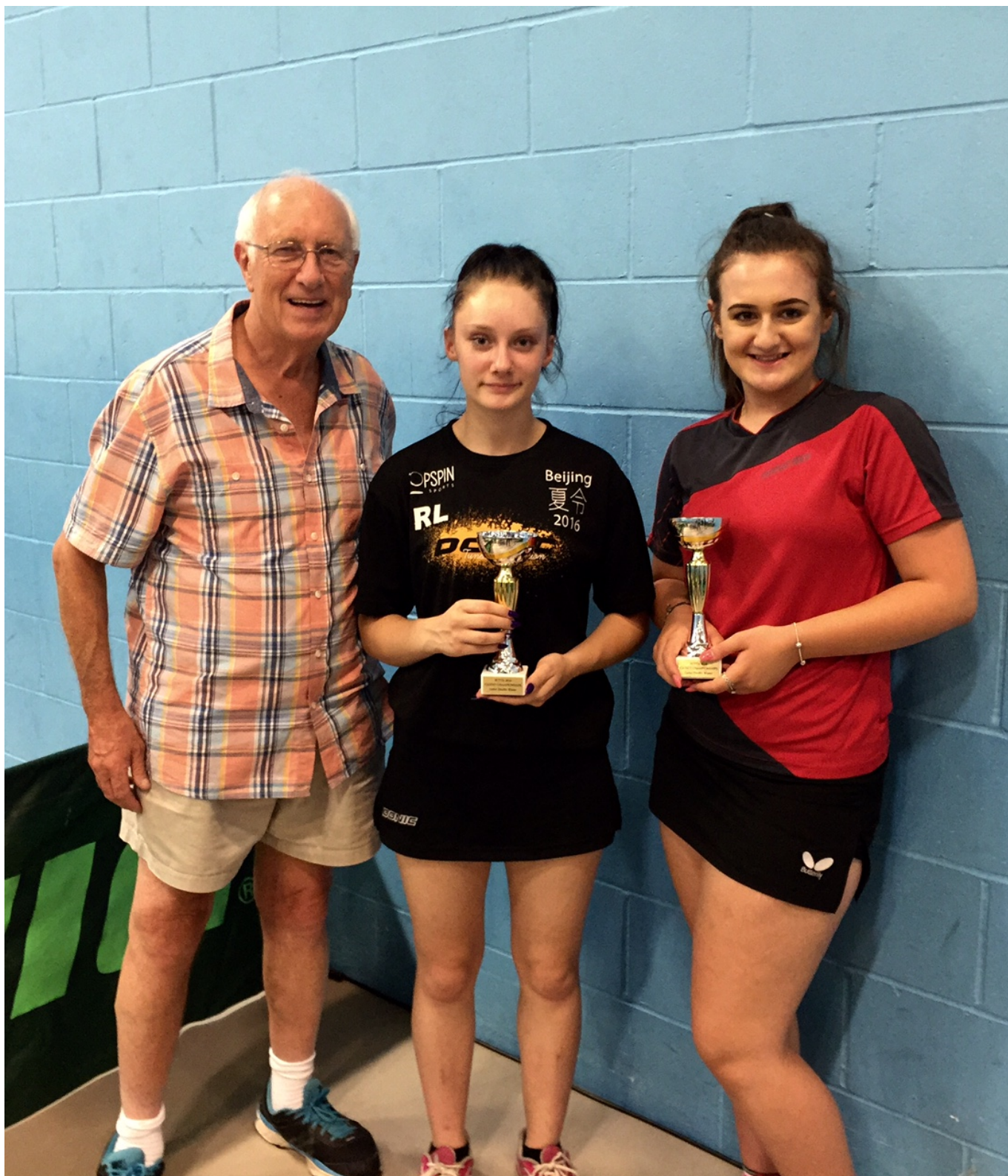
In the Ladies' Singles, we had a round-robin, with Lin Roff, Gracie Edwards & Rebecca Lowman each winning two matches. In the countback, the title went to Lin who won seven sets, losing three, with the runner-up position going to Gracie 7-4 and Rebecca 6-4.

The Men's Doubles saw a good final with doubles specialists Gary Young & Glenn Johnson just losing out to father and son combination Andrew and Tony Halling -9, 7, 5, -7, 3.



Tony & Andrew Halling with Arthur Clark

The Ladies' Doubles was won by County Juniors Gracie Edwards & Rebecca Lowman, who beat Lin Roff & Tina Hutchinson 5, 5, 11.



Rebecca Lowman and Gracie Edwards receive their trophies

The Mixed Doubles was also won by two of the County's leading Juniors, Jack Stockdale and Gracie Edwards beating Norbert Fullerton & Lin Roff 8, 7, 6.

Next was the Under-21s, which saw Josh Dye repeat his victory in the Men's Singles, beating County Junior Sam Hume in the final. He didn't have it all his own way and a tight final saw Josh just take the Title -5, 10, -5, 8, 6.

The final match on Saturday was the Level 2 Open Singles and this was won by John Cleasby, who beat Paul Pells 12, 8, -8, 7.

Day 2 of the Championships saw the Over-40s take centre stage and we enjoyed plenty of good matches.

In the Men's Over-40s Singles, there were shocks as unseeded Django Fung took the title. Django, who is more renowned as the Manager of Ronnie O'Sullivan and Jude Trump, turned his attention to Table Tennis.

In the top half of the draw, No 1 Seed Rik James lost a close five-setter to Mark Wicker, only for Mark to lose in the semi-final to No 4 seed, Gary Young.

In the bottom half of the draw, there was an early shock when No 3 seed Kevin Read lost in straight sets to Fung. Django then beat Southend Premier player Babul McLeod, again in straight sets.

The final was a very tight match poised at two sets all and 9-9 in the decisive fifth set, before Django took the Title 9, -12, -5, 6, 9. This was the shock of Championships, great effort by Django.

The Ladies' Over-40s Singles title went to Jan Fuller, who beat Tina Hutchinson 9, 6, 7. Both players have returned to our sport after many years out, having both been leading juniors in the County.

The Over-40s Doubles was played as an Open Event. Favourites Mark Wicker and Paul Davison justified their seeding and took the title, beating Gary Young and Glenn Johnson 8, 8, 6.

Final event of the day was the Level 2 Over-40s Open Singles, which saw Southend Premier players Norbert Fullerton and Richard Brown face each other in the final. It was a very good match with Norbert just edging it 5, 11, -3, 11.

On to Day 3, we enjoyed watching the Over-50s, Over-60s and Over-70s.

There were plenty of exciting tussles and it was a great demonstration of how Table Tennis is a sport for life. Each event was played as an Open event: with the Over-50s in groups and the Over-60s and 70s as straight knockouts.

In the O50s Alex Abbott and Rick James met in the final and we enjoyed watching a close five-setter, with Alex just beating his long-term rival and friend Rik 9, -9, 9, -2, 6.

In the O60's, after reaching both the Men's and Over-40s Doubles Finals, but just losing out in each, Glenn Johnson went one better this time to take the title, beating Peter Cranmer in the final 7, 8, 8.

In the O70's Peter Cranmer made up for his disappointment in the Over-60s, beating Bill Smith in the final -6, 7, 4, 9. It was great to see these two stalwarts of our game still maintaining a high standard of play.

There has been some good feedback about these championships which will be fed back to the Essex Management Committee and it will be up to them to decide if this event can continue.

Our thanks go to the Staff of the Rayleigh Leisure Centre for making us so welcome and always being on hand, should any problems arise. Thanks also to Jayne Johnson for producing the various result and match sheets & for organising the control desk for the three days.

Running the desk for Saturday & Monday along with Jayne and Barrie Delf was Arthur Clark. Jayne & Ken looked after the desk on the Sunday. Our thanks to Anthon Ranjit-Singh for the helping setting up and taking down the match room and helping throughout the tournament. Finally, a big thank you to all of the players & their families who supported these Championships.

More winning pictures:



Jack Stockdale and Gracie Edwards



John Cleasby



Jan Fuller





Norbert Fullerton



Django Fung



Alex Abbott



Peter Cranmer



Glenn Johnson

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