



Josh reigns supreme at Cippenham

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Josh Bennett, who spearheads the Cippenham team in the Senior British League, justified his top billing by winning the Junior Boys' Singles title at the second Cippenham Junior 4-Star Open Championships at the weekend.

In the final, Bennett beat his Kent county colleague James Smith in a match that swung one way and then the other. Smith made the faster start and took the first game only for Bennett to hit back to lead 2-1. It might have seemed that Bennett had the title in his pocket at that stage but the second seed was having none of it and tied the match up at 2-2. In the end, however, it was the top seed who prevailed.

Prior to that, Bennett had dropped only one game and that was to George Hazell in the last 16. In the next round, Bennett made short work of surprise quarter-finalist Ugur Saglik who had earlier only qualified from his group in second place to Jamie Liu.

However, it was the diminutive Liu who was making people sit up and take notice. The Kingfisher, Reading, youngster reached the semi-final from an unseeded position beating Carl Breindel, Carl Baldry, cadet losing finalist Amirul Hussain and Gaurav Aravind all 3-0 before finding Smith too hot to handle in the semi-final.

One of the best matches of the weekend, which drew many spectators to the far corner of the hall was the second round match between Eren Gozcu and Joseph Hee. Hee had announced his recent arrival from Singapore the previous day when he won the cadet title and was expected to do well also in the older age group. The powerful Gozcu, though, saw to it that Hee did not make it a double success.

Gozcu was only a replacement entry on the day of the tournament and not high enough in the rankings to warrant a seeding. However, he set about the defensively-minded Singaporean with a passion that showed through whenever he won important points.

Gozcu could have won 3-0 but served off at the second of his match points. Hee then came back to draw level 2-2 in games but Gozcu found another gear in the final game to clinch an excellent victory. He then beat Ben

Foster in the next round before losing out to last year's runner-up Jonny McMullan in the quarter-final, despite winning the first two games.



Kate Cheer in action at the event

The Junior Girls' Singles was also won by the top seed, Kate Cheer. After an uneventful progression through the rounds, Cheer was tested to the limit in the semi-final by Sarah Mengistab, being 2-1 down at one stage. However, she survived comfortably in the fifth game and that set up a final showdown with the 2015 champion Zahna Hall in the final.

Hall, seeded only three, eliminated second seed Charlotte Bardsley in the semi-final but, despite taking the second game, could not influence the final enough to stop the top seed.



Cadet champion Joseph Hee

The Cadet Boys' Singles, played on the Saturday, showed Joseph Hee to be in a class all of his own. Unknown to the organisers and without any national ranking points, Hee was not seeded. It subsequently turned out, despite being of cadet age, that he was the top junior player in Singapore and also ranked in the top 10 of their overall men's list.

Hee carved his way imperiously through the draw and gave notice that he would be a serious contender for the junior event the following day. Hee was placed in the top half of the draw and it was therefore top seed Ethan Walsh that drew the short straw, beaten 11-7, 11-2, 11-6 in the semi-final.

Meanwhile, in the bottom half, it was business as usual with the second and third seeds, Amirul Hussain and Jamie Liu, meeting in their semi. This went with seeding and it was therefore Hussain who faced up to Hee in the final, a match Hee won 3-0.



Cadet girls' winner Charlotte Bardsley

The Cadet Boys' Singles proved to be the only event during the weekend that was not won by the top seed as the counterpart girls' event went to form with Charlotte Bardsley winning without the concession of a single game.

However, the event was not without its upsets with second seed Danielle Kelly losing to Jasmine Williams in the preliminary group stage. Kelly progressed, however, until she was beaten again by third seed Katie Holt in the quarter-final.

Williams reached the same stage but was then beaten by fourth seed Darcie Proud who went on to defeat Lara Whitton in the semi but was no match for Bardsley in the final.

Cippenham Table Tennis Club would like to thank the large army of volunteers who made this prestigious event possible, including the band of 13 umpires. Referee Steve Smith and his deputy Mike Atkinson kept the tournament moving while the tireless Ken Phillips collated all the entries.

Jan Chapman, who co-ordinated the umpires, and Becky Hayes, on the check-in desk, did much to ensure the smooth running of the event while Graham Trimming took and published a large album of photographs (available on the Cippenham TTC Flickr site).

Results:

	Winner:	Runner-up:
Junior Boys' Singles	Josh Bennett (Kent)	James Smith (Kent)
Junior Girls' Singles	Kate Cheer (Sussex)	Zahna Hall (Middx)
Cadet Boys' Singles	Joseph Hee (Middx)	Amiral Hussain (Lancs)
Cadet Girls' Singles	Charlotte Bardsley (Staffs)	Darcie Proud (Lincs)
Junior Boys' Plate	Edan Regan (Cornwall)	Josh Amanor (Middx)
Junior Girls' Plate	Charlotte Weatherby (Durham)	Mya Sultan (Middx)
Cadet Boys' Plate	Fraser Kent (Sussex)	William Fricker (Bucks)
Cadet Girls' Plate	Amy Marriott (Yorks)	Mari-Grace Baldwin (Devon)

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