



Cippenham Team 2*: Eggheads prevail

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Posted On: January 10, 2017

Another maximum entry was received for the 11th running of the Cippenham Team 2-Star Open on Saturday.

In fact, the tournament was over-subscribed and some potential entries had to be refused. A maximum of 24 teams can be accommodated for this competition which, in addition to being a team rather than individual tournament, also features the progressive knockout format.

This is unique in open tournaments in this country and again proved very popular with teams arriving from far and wide including Devon, south Wales and Yorkshire.

The tournament got under way with teams drawn into eight groups of three. Seven of the top ranked teams prevailed but Corby Smash TTC were defeated by Archway Peterborough whose ranking was only slightly inferior.

Archway's Steve Gray and Martin Freeland embarked on a route through the event that saw them ultimately finish in seventh position. Corby, on the other hand, beat the locally based Sh-awesome in the first knockout round but then, pitched against another of the top eight, fell to the strangely named "That Peach, That That, That Dad", the disguise worn by Tommy Gritton and Quentin Kwan.

Corby, Tony West and Henry Arthur, were consequently relegated into the middle section of the draw from which they finished top in overall ninth place. Gritton and Kwan finished sixth overall, losing their final match to Maccabi, Jeremy Banks and Jack Josephs.

Of the semi-finalists, only Brummie Old Boys had suffered defeat along the way. That came in the first round after the groups when London-based Highbury TT inflicted defeat on the Midlands. However, Brummie OB turned that around with victories over Cardiff-based Class Act and Maccabi to qualify for the semis.

The two semi-finals were relatively straightforward affairs with The Eggheads beating Brummie OB and "Its Only Ping Pong" beating Highbury both 2-0. The final matches, though, were pulsating dramatic events worthy of any competition.

The final itself was between The Eggheads and Its Only Ping Pong. Three of the four players went into this match unbeaten and the only player to lose that record was Mitchell Jones. He was beaten 16-14 in the fifth and deciding game by Craig Bryant in a match that had most of the rest of the hall stop play to watch. Jones had two match points of his own against the player ranked 11th in England, 28 places higher than the Watford man.

In the second set, Jones' team-mate Jamie Fisher looked all at sea against the wily hard-bat skills of Martin Gunn. However, the younger player turned it around brilliantly and won the next two games to square it at 2-2. However, Gunn, the Old Windsor resident who has a fantastic recent record of winning tournaments at Cippenham, was not to be outgunned and eventually won 3-2.



Mitchell Jones and Eddie Fisher

The play-off for third and fourth place between Highbury and Brummie OB was just as close. Again, the final score was 2-0 but both sets required a deciding game. In the first of those, Highbury's Josh Nashed just about managed to hold on to defeat Mike Browne 13-11 in the fifth and then Fabien Mauroy followed up 11-6 in the fifth against Jody Bevington.

Cippenham's Steve Smith, playing for RAF, had an exceptional day, winning six of his seven matches while Ashley Shaw, playing with his brother Ollie as Sh-awesome, managed three wins. Another player who impressed, and took his team to eighth place, was Sam Ricks who won seven of his eight matches.

The tournament was organised and refereed by Graham Trimming.

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