



Record breaking performance illuminates Cleveland Grand Prix

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Men's Singles

There is nothing new to compiling records of achievements or droughts in sporting circles, even at the moment we're waxing lyrical at Real Madrid's outstanding unbeaten run, both Chelsea and The New Saints record winning streaks and, perhaps less fortunately, Jack Rodwell's inability to win a game for Sunderland (the figure stands at 1,348 days as a starter).

So when you raise the 'Grand Prix King' Ryan Jenkins' name amongst one of these feats, you expect it to be related to success; his 54 GP victories or 13 Welsh National Singles titles would attest to that. However, the surprising record entering the Cleveland Grand Prix was that the Welshman had not won a main Grand Prix event for 511 days.

A win at the satellite Jersey Grand Prix excluded, his barren spell stretched back to 23rd August 2015 when he picked up the season-opening Liverpool Grand Prix title with a victory over Ryota Kawai. Safe to say then, 'the King' was overdue.

He started his campaign at Thornaby Pavillion as comfortably as ever – I can't remember the last time the man from Rhondda conceded an end in the groups for that matter. Beating both Jacob Goss and Chris Edwards 3-0 he raced into the knockout stages.

There too, he would impose his usual calm and precision.

Further 3-0 wins would follow over James Garrod and Joe Clark to secure a spot in the semi-finals where he would meet Matthew Leete – the Lincolnshire player who won the men's band 1 on Saturday.

On the other side of the draw, second seed Darius Knight made his way successfully through a four man group including Ethan Chapman, John Magnall and Joseph Goss before storming past local boy David Gofton in round

13-0 (11-9, 11-2, 11-2).

Knight would then face a tough task against Cleveland's own Alec Ward in the quarter-finals – the 6th seed the best prospect of local success, especially after a confident 3-0 win over 5th seed Simon Nutch in the previous round.

All seemed to be going to plan for Knight after securing a 2-0 lead, but the tide turned quickly in games three and four as Ward recorded back-to-back 11-6 scorelines to level the match. Perhaps that spurred the Londoner back into action, as he dominated the final game, eventually sealing his last four spot with a 3-2 (14-12, 11-9, 6-11, 6-11, 11-5) win.

With the semi-finals set it was a case of role-reversal for the top two seeds. After his difficult 3-2 quarter-final win, Knight was able to blast past Sam Kwan 3-0 (11-8, 11-6, 11-8), while Jenkins, who had cruised to the last four without dropping an end, was troubled greatly by Matthew Leete.

Leete twice leveled the match to stay in contention for a place in the final, but ultimately fell short in the deciding game, with the experienced Welshman earning a comfortable lead 7-2 lead en route to a 3-2 (11-4, 5-11, 13-11, 11-13, 11-4) victory.

If Jenkins wanted to end his 511 day drought, he was going to have to do it against his biggest threat, with the dangerous left-hander Knight facing him in the final – a man who had already won three times on the grand prix circuit this season (Crawley, Blackpool and Cardiff) and led the season's overall standings.



Darius Knight (L) and Ryan Jenkins (R) with Colin Davison

As it was a day for records, why not another in the final? Hard to prove, but Jenkins 11-0 romping of the first set in Cleveland was the only time in recent memory a set in the men's singles final had been taken to zero.

While Knight did recover in the second game, you could tell the pattern had already been set. As his Welsh opponent secured the game 11-7 it was all or nothing in the third. Something the Englishman almost manufactured from 9-5 down, but couldn't complete – conceding the third game 11-9 and losing the final to the grand prix grand master.

One record run ended for Jenkins – a title after such a long break, another one extended – his overall grand prix tally up to 55, still stretching well beyond any other player who has graced the British tables.



Matt Leete (L) and Sam Kwan (R) with Alan Ransome MBE

Men's Under-21s

Matthew Leete wasted no time at all to dominate the men's under-21 and race to the title at the Cleveland Grand Prix.

There was no match for the player who had already won the band 1 prize on Saturday and picked up a semi-finalists cheque for his men's singles performance as he powered his way through five successive opponents in double quick time.

He beat Jordan Wykes, Sam Kwan and Lee Tinkler in his group and then advanced quickly to the title by sweeping Joe Clark 3-0 (11-6, 11-9, 11-8) in his semi-final and then disposing of Kwan a second time in the final 3-0 (11-9, 11-2, 15-13).

Kwan, having progressed from the group beat Dylan Curry 3-1 (11-1, 8-11, 11-7, 11-7) in the quarter-final and then James Garrod 3-1 (11-4, 9-11, 11-8, 11-5) in the semi-final before falling short at the last hurdle.

The Cleveland player did, however, pick up a consolation prize as he was awarded the Player of the Weekend following two semi-final and two final appearances over the two days in the North East.



Jevon Chan (L) and Rory Scott (R) with Alan Ransome MBE

Veterans' Singles

Jevon Chan upset top seed Rory Scott in the final of the Veterans' tournament at Thornaby Pavillion to pick up a hard-fought prize.

Top seed Scott was a comprehensive victor in group 1 to start his campaign. A 3-0 (11-6, 11-4, 11-6) win over Nigel Savage kicked things off before follow up victories over Chris Marlow 3-0 (11-4, 11-5, 11-8) and Gary Whyman 3-1 (11-3, 10-12, 11-5, 11-7) sealed top spot.

He maintained his form in the knockouts, easily getting past John Magnall 3-0 (11-9, 11-4, 11-9) and Peter Wilkinson 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 14-12) to set up the meeting with Cleveland's Jevon Chan.

Chan had faced fewer games thanks to his two-man group, but still had to fight in a couple of tough contests to secure his final berth. Firstly, in his only group game, he got past Magnall 3-1 (11-9, 5-11, 13-11, 11-7), before later, in his semi-final, he battled back against David Ashwell 3-2 (12-10, 11-9, 10-12, 9-11, 11-7). Sandwiched between the two results was a more routine 3-1 win over Helmuth Osborne.

The final itself was a close fought affair with little breathing room between the pair at any point. After the pair traded a couple of close opening games, Chan made the significant move to pick up the third game 14-12 having saved game points.

It looked as though his Sussex opponent would force a deciding game at 9-6 up in the fourth but a rally of five consecutive points for Chan meant the final had an early finish and the title stayed in the North East.



Josh Weatherby (L) and Alec Ward (R) with Alan Ransome MBE

Junior Boys Singles

Alec Ward coasted to the Junior Boys title, dropping just two games as he picked up a late honour on Sunday evening at the Cleveland Grand Prix.

The local star, who earlier pushed Darius Knight all the way in the men's singles, was always likely to be unstoppable in the one-off junior tournament with his next closest competitor ranked significantly below him.

He completed three confident wins in his group, dropping a single game to Thomas Rayner but beating both Danny Bajwa and Charlie Morton 3-0. He followed that up with a comfortable 3-0 semi-final victory over David Gofton.

Meeting him in the final was plucky Durham youngster Josh Weatherby who beat Gofton, Ben Savage and Chris Edwards all 3-0 in his group before battling past Danny Bajwa 3-1 (11-9, 12-10, 9-11, 11-7) in the semi-finals.

With little expected of the younger player, it was a surprise when Weatherby stole home in the first end 14-12. However, after that point the top seed Ward found his rhythm and eased home winning the next three games 11-3, 11-6, 11-6.

Cleveland Grand Prix Results

Men's Singles

Ryan Jenkins bt Darius Knight 3-0 (11-0, 11-7, 11-9)

Men's Under-21s

Matthew Leete bt Sam Kwan 3-0 (11-9, 11-2, 15-13)

Veterans' Singles

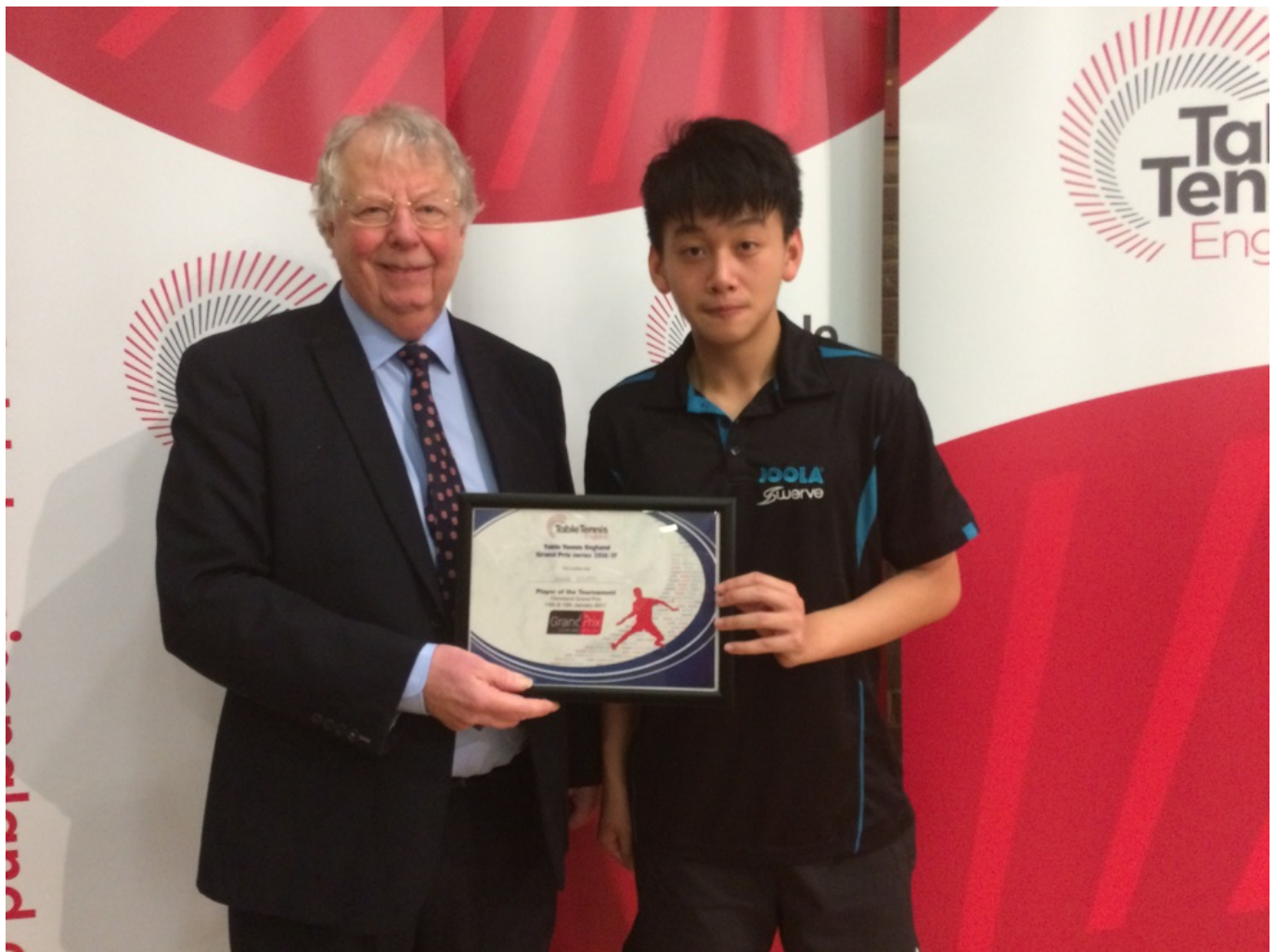
Jevon Chan bt Rory Scott 3-1 (11-8, 9-11, 14-12, 11-9)

Junior Boys Singles

Alec Ward bt Josh Weatherby 3-1 (12-14, 11-3, 11-6, 11-6)

Player of the weekend

Sam Kwan



Player of the Weekend Sam Kwan with Alan Ransome MBE

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