



Chelmsford & District: Cole and Johnson target titles

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It's that time of the year again and the 2017 M&G Investments Chelmsford Closed Table Tennis Championships take place from 7pm on Friday January 27 to Sunday January 29.

The venue is Hylands School, Sherwood Drive, Chelmsford. Admission is free and hopefully lots of former players will drop into watch over the weekend.

The Chelmsford League Committee are as always very grateful for the very generous sponsorship of M&G Investments. Anna Emtage, Charity & Community Relations Manager at M&G Investments, said: "M&G Investments is delighted to be sponsoring the 2017 Championship and I am looking forward to what I am sure will be an exciting event."

The 'blue riband' event the Men's Singles promises to be very hotly contested this year. Four times Chelmsford Champion David Cole is top seed and he certainly possesses that all important big occasion temperament but there are as many as 15 other players who will be hoping that on a good day it might just be their year.

Five times Braintree Men's Singles Champion Paul Davison is seeded No 2, with two times former Chelmsford Champion Alex Abbott and 2003 Winner Keiran Lally at joint No 3.

Seeded in the five to eight bracket are Brandon Crouchman, Duncan Taylor, Colin Stallwood and Trevor Lloyd whilst the other players seeded as group winners are Gary Young, George Reeves, newcomer Wale Bada, Sam Hume and Simon Webber. There is clearly no shortage of good players taking part this year despite the fact that last year's winner Tony Halling and runner-up Rik James are missing.

As always certain groups look intriguing and with two players to qualify look out for Group 12 where Alex Abbott takes on Charles Sweeney, Reece Seddon and Adrian Pitt and group no. seven where Colin Stallwood comes face to face with another newcomer Ross Saxby, Hamish Innes and David Gatheral. Group eight has a real depth to it

and Brandon Crouchman will be up against Oliver Reynolds, James Hicks and Peter Windley.

Julie Johnson is the top seed in the Ladies Singles' where she is bidding to win the title for an incredible 24th time. After taking a year out through injury Julie has been on fine form this year and her playing record of 50% in the very evenly matched second division illustrates that she is playing as well as ever. Last year's champion Dane Baldry is seeded second whilst Jan Fuller, Shirley Carroll and Lin Roff are all capable of causing major upsets.

In recent years the Men's Doubles has been one of the most open events. Last year's winners Paul Davison and Alex Abbott are top seeds with the winners two years ago, Scott Dowsett and Brandon Crouchman, seeded second. The joint No 3 seeds are Colin Stallwood and Trevor Lloyd and Glen Johnson and Gary Young. In what is a clearly a very strong event the fifth seeded pairings are Duncan Taylor / Charles Sweeny, Wale Bada / Reece Seddon, Sam Hume / Gary Cattermole and George Reeves / Ross Saxby.

Julie Johnson / David Cole will be strong favourites to capture the Mixed Doubles title for an 11th time. However they will certainly take nothing for granted as two years ago they were seeded No 1 but sensationally lost to Ciaran Whelan and Dawn Baldry who in turn lost in the final to Steve Whiteley and Shirley Carroll. New pairing Duncan Taylor / Jan Fuller are second seeds and Gary Young / Linda Roff and Ciaran Whelan / Dawn Baldry share the joint third berth.

As befits his top status in the Men's Singles David Cole is also the favourite in the Veterans' Singles, where Paul Davison is seeded to meet him in the Final.

Alex Abbott and Duncan Taylor are the joint no 3 seeds with Colin Stallwood, George Reeves, Trevor Lloyd, Gary Young, Gary Cattermole, Glen Johnson, Wale Bada and Steve Whiteley all seeded to emerge as group winners. Group six looks to be the pick of the bunch here. Gary Young does battle with Adrian Pitt and James Hicks.

David Cole looks set to have a very busy weekend and he is also top seed in the Over-50s' Singles. This time Trevor Lloyd is seeded to meet him in the final. With a playing record of 80% in the first division and a victory over Cole to his name this season, Lloyd won't be an easy nut to crack. George Reeves and Glen Johnson are the joint third seeds and Group Two stands out here. Trevor Lloyd faces Julie Johnson and Babul McLeod – the 2014 Chelmsford Over-50s champion.

In the Over-60s' Singles Ian Whiteside the holder will face tough opposition from Glen Johnson, Steve Whiteley and Hamish Innes. Group three looks to be the pick of the bunch. Whiteley, Innes and Mike Johnston come face to face.

The Veterans' Doubles is also very open. Alex Abbott / Paul Davison are favourites and are seeded to meet George Reeves and Duncan Taylor in the final. Other pairings who should be in with a shout are Glen Johnson / Gary Young and Gary Cattermole / David Cole. Possible wildcards include Trevor Lloyd / Colin Stallwood and James Hicks / Adam Buxton.

Sam Hume is seeded to play Ryan Gooday in both the Under-21 Singles and Junior Boys' Singles finals and only Dan Berry who features in the Under-21 Singles looks remotely capable of halting their progress. Hume is also favourite to annex the Junior Doubles title where he is paired with Connor Payne. Their opponents in the final are expected to be Matthew Elliott / Nathan Fry.

Connor Payne will also be looking to strike gold in the Under-16 Singles where he is seeded to play Matthew Elliott in the final. Toby Kelly carries the burden of being the favourite in the Under-14 Singles where he is seeded to play Rio Teplizki in the Final.

Sunday's play is dominated by the Divisional Singles events – and these are every bit as competitive as the Men's and Women's Singles. The Division Two Singles should be particularly hard fought. Adrian Pitt is the top seed and James Hicks is seeded No 2 with Ryan Pitt and Lee McHugh the joint No 3 seeds.

McHugh will be tested in his group where he faces Ciaran Whelan and David Gatheral whilst James Hicks also faces tricky opposition first thing on the Sunday morning. He has to take on Robert Shrimpton and Victor Chan. Neil Freeman and Ciaran Whelan are the top two seeds in the Division Three Singles whilst that billing goes to

Roger Hance and Trevor Collin in the Division Four Singles. Pewist Osman and Mark Glenister are the top two seeds in the Division Five Singles.

Finals Night takes place this year on Monday February 13 at 7.30pm at Old Chelmsfordians Association, Lawford Lane, Roxwell Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2NS.

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