



Witheford stars at Worcestershire Schools contest

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The senior Worcestershire schools individual table tennis competition was held at St Egwin's School in Evesham and the players provided some fabulous table tennis.

The U19 boys was competed in a round-robin format with Craig Witheford of Prince Henry's High (Evesham) facing Tamino Hinderman, Abbah Jackson and Brian Leung, all from Bromsgrove school. Witheford dominated proceedings winning each of his matches 3-0. Hinderman claimed the runners-up spot, with Jackson taking third.

The U16 and U19 girls only drew three competitors for each age group. In order to give the girls a decent amount of matches to play, the age groups were combined to play a round-robin tournament.

Charlotte Bardsley of Heathfield School (Kidderminster) played conservatively to claim the U16 title, easily defeating Borislava Mekushina and Nelly Limbu from Bromsgrove School. Limbu went on to claim the runners-up trophy, defeating her school friend in a tense five-match thriller with a result of 3-2.

Holly Bilsborrow of Prince Henry's (Evesham), Karen Chu Kiu Yan and Rachel Tsui of Bromsgrove fought for the honour of claiming the U19 title. With Rachel still learning the game and putting in a valiant effort against the two more experienced girls, Bilsborrow and Chu Kiu Yan played to decide who would become champion. In a brilliant match that could have gone either way Chu Kiu Yan went onto win 3-2.

The U16 Boys competition drew 15 talented players from across the county. In the quarter-final the No 6 seed Alex Emms of Prince Henry's caused a major upset beating No 1 seed Daniel Fellows of Bowbrook School (Pershore) 3-1.

The semi-finals pitched No 2 seed Murat Shafigullin of Bromsgrove v No 4 seed Ed Sommers of Prince Henry's and No 3 seed Ali Witheford v No 6 seed Alex Emms, both of Prince Henry's. The top seeds were both comfortable

3-0 winners.

Sommers claimed third place, defeating Emms 3-0. The final produced some excellent table tennis. Shafigullin started nervously and allowed Witheford to take the first game 11-5. The following games were all tight affairs, however, Shafigullin relying on some scintillating top spinning drives was able to close the match out 11-8, 13-11, 11-9 to win 3-1.



U19 Girls, from left, Holly Bilsborrow, Karen Chu Kiu Yan and Rachel Tsui

With all four champions in place the tournament was completed with an extra competition for the 'Glory of being champion of champions'

The U19 Boys champion (Witheford) bt U19 Girls r/up (Bilsborrow) 3-0; The U19 Girls champion (Chu Kiu Yan) bt U19 Boys r/up (Hinderman) 3-0; Witheford became the Overall U19 champion, defeating Chu Kiu Yan 3-0

The U16 Girls champion (Bardsley) bt the U16 Boys r/up (Witheford) 3-0; The U16 Boys champion (Shafigullin) bt the U16 Girls r/up (Limbu) 3-0; Bardsley became the Overall U16 champion, defeating Shafigullin 3-1.

Charlotte Bardsley now faced Ali Witheford's older brother Craig in a sporting battle for the glory of becoming Champion of champions. Bardsley quickly went into a one-game lead, taking the first 11-9, cleverly varying the pace of her shots. Witheford drew level, taking the next game 14-12. Whilst Bardsley was displaying the higher skill level, having played three matches in quick succession she was beginning to tire. The supremely fit Witheford seized his opportunity and was able to close the match out winning the next two games 13-11 and 11-7 to win 3-1.



U16 Boys, from left, Ed Sommers, Murat Shafigullin and Ali Witheford

Many parents, coaches and teachers of other players stayed on to watch the final match and agreed that they had seldom witnessed such an excellent exhibition of table tennis.

Witheford's stellar performance throughout the day earned him the trophy for Player of the Tournament.

John McKay, WSTTA representative, presented the trophies.

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