



## Chelmsford & District: Saxby takes title

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26 year-old Ross Saxby is the 2017 M&G Investments Chelmsford & District Table Tennis League Men's Singles champion. He was crowned champion on Monday night at the Old Chelmsfordians Club in Chelmsford.

Considered by many people to be the most likely winner he didn't disappoint although he was hard pushed in both his semi-final and final.

Saxby was tied at 2-2 in his semi-final against Essex No 1 Junior Sam Hume in a match where there was literally nothing between the two players for the first four ends. Scores of 9-11, 19-17, 11-9, 10-12 tell their own story with the ice-cool Hume belying his tender years to level at 2-2. But Saxby came out all guns blazing in the fifth end which he won 11-4.

In the other semi, George Reeves dominated from the off and although Scott Dowsett levelled at 8-8 in an exciting second end that was as close as he got. Reeves eventually won 11-3, 11-8, 11-6.

In the final it was Reeves who struck first and he was by far the more dominant player as he raced home 11-5 in the first end. The crucial point of the match came at 9-7 in the second end with Reeves leading. Again it was Saxby who showed the greater composure and belief just when he needed it and he levelled by taking the last four points to win 11-9.

He now had the bounce and look of a champion and although Reeves continued to pressure him it was Saxby who stormed home 3-1 (5-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-8).

The Ladies' Singles final featured two players who had played in their group match in the actual championship event. Lin Roff came out on top there in four close ends but this time it was Dawn Baldry who called all the shots.

Hitting with flair and power particularly on the forehand she raced into a 2-0 lead and although Roff fought back superbly from 4-9 down to level at 9-9 in the third end Baldry wasn't to be denied. She claimed the last two points to win her second title – 11-8, 11-8, 11-9.

It was title No 14 for Julie Johnson in the Mixed Doubles where she teamed up with her nephew Ryan Gooday for the first time to beat Jan Fuller and Duncan Taylor in five ends. When Fuller and Taylor levelled at 2-2 they must have fancied their chances. But in the fifth end Johnson and Gooday didn't put a foot wrong and they ran out 3-2 (8-11, 11-5, 11-8, 11-13, 11-4) winners.

The Men's Doubles final produced an upset of sorts. Playing with confidence and application in what was a very cagey and tight game it was Wale Bada and Reece Seddon who came out on top 3-1 (11-9, 11-8, 6-11, 11-8) against the two players contesting the Men's Singles Final – Ross Saxby and George Reeves. They became the fifth different pair to win this title in the last five years – proof if any was needed as to what an "open" event this is.

The Under-21 Singles final featured two players who had already appeared on the night and in a repeat of the Junior Boys' Singles final it was Sam Hume who beat Ryan Gooday narrowly 11-8, 11-9, 11-9. Gooday was in contention throughout and Hume will have been relieved to have won 3-0.

The Veterans' final completed what was a great night for Wale Bada. With his spinny deceptive serves and booming forehand he was always looking to attack against Paul Davison.

Bada won the first quite comfortably 11-6 and when he shaded the second end 13-11 the writing was on the wall for Davison. Although Davison dug deep in the third end it wasn't enough and Bada ran out 11-8 winner.

Guests of honour for the evening included the Mayor of Chelmsford, Councillor Patricia Hughes, and the Mayor's Consort Paul Hughes as well as Anna Emtage, the Charity and Community Relations Manager at M&G Investments, Ken Field – Essex County Table Tennis Chairman – and Jayne Johnson – Essex County Table Tennis Association General Secretary.

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