



Cambridge extend Varsity winning run

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Cambridge University won two of the three matches when they played host to Oxford University in the 74th Varsity match at the Cambridge University Sports Centre.

Joining Cambridge Women's Firsts this year is BUCS Individuals Championships 2014 Women's Singles winner Clara Chau, while Oxford Men's Firsts looked set to break their 15-year Varsity winless streak under new captain Abraham Ng, an experienced international player who had won the Australian National U18 Mixed Doubles event.

Compared with last year's line-ups, both Oxford and Cambridge Men's Seconds' have received a complete makeover. It was shaping up to be a tight and exciting contest.

The Men's Seconds were first up. In the top half, both singles matches of Cambridge 1st seed and captain Paul Erdunast were close-run affairs. After narrowly falling to Oxford 2nd seed Nabil Hudda in five sets, Erdunast avenged his loss with a crucial 3-2 win over Oxford 1st seed Jean-Francois Ton.

Cambridge 2nd seed Wilson Chen similarly required a long drawn out match to beat Ton in five sets, but suffered a 3-1 defeat at the hands of Hudda.

In the bottom half, Oxford 3rd seed Shailendra Nama prevailed against Cambridge 4th seed Vyas Raina in a tense, deuce-filled five setter. Nama fared better against Cambridge 3rd seed Zhihan Xu, winning 3-0. Oxford 4th seed Jason Brickhill also secured a comfortable 3-0 win over Xu, but Raina clinched Cambridge's only win in Men's Seconds' bottom half with a 3-0 victory over Brickhill.

Down 3-5, Cambridge Men's Seconds could only fight for a tie at this point. Unfortunately, both Oxford Seconds' doubles pairings of Ton/Hudda and Nama/Brickhill proved to be too strong against Chen/Erdunast and twin brothers Raina/Raina respectively, both culminating in emphatic straight-sets wins.

Result: Oxford II beat Cambridge II 7-3

The Women's Firsts matches were next. In the top half, Cambridge 1st seed Clara Chau showed her championship pedigree in her 3-0 romp of both Oxford 1st seed Lucy Zhu and 2nd seed Niloofar Karaji.

Cambridge 2nd seed and captain Bijun Tang had to fend off the valiant efforts of Zhu, whose play fell short in the final deciding set. Fuelled by her win, Tang proceeded to dispatch Karaji in straight sets.

In the bottom half, Oxford 3rd seed Louise Todd lost to Cambridge 4th seed Eva Dema and 3rd seed Lisa Li in straight sets, while Oxford 4th seed Kritica Dwivedi ground out a hard fought 3-2 win over Dema and secured the only point of Oxford Women's 1sts.

Li closed off the Women's Firsts' singles matches with a 3-1 win over Dwivedi. After scoring the singles matches, Cambridge Women's Firsts' had built an insurmountable 7-1, rendering the remaining two doubles matches a matter of formality. Both teams continued to give their all, but ultimately Cambridge swept both matches in straight sets.

Result: Cambridge beat Oxford 9-1

Supporters of both sides worked themselves into a frenzy over the course of the Men's Firsts matches. At the top, Cambridge 1st seed and captain Hampton Tao maintained his unbeaten record over old rival Oxford 2nd seed Kristofer Hammerback with a 3-1 win, but came up short against Oxford 1st seed Abraham Ng in a 3-0 defeat. Cambridge 2nd seed Eddie Wei similarly fell at the hands of Ng but forced Hammerback to produce an excellent performance and beat Wei 3-0.

In the bottom half, Oxford 3rd seed Pan Hu beat Cambridge 4th seed Aland Chan in straight sets but was handed a swift defeat by Cambridge 3rd seed Marco Wong in similar fashion. After Oxford 4th seed Xi Dai managed to take only take one set off Wong and none off Chan, the 4-4 running tally meant that it came down to the two doubles matches to produce a winner or a draw.



Marco Wong and Aland Chan

Cambridge pair of Chan/Wong drew first blood over Oxford pair of Ng/Hu in a convincing 3-0 win. The score does not do justice to the nerve wracking experience of both Light Blue and Dark Blue supporters. Ng/Hu hung

close whenever Chan/Wong tried to pull away and their fantastic rallies drew continuous applause.

After their defeat, the weight of not contributing yet another loss to Oxford Men's Firsts 16-year winless streak came down to Dai/Hammerback. Facing the Cambridge pair of Rubio Lara/Wei, they responded well to pressure and took the first set 11-8. Yet equally determined not to extend last year's disappointing draw, Rubio Lara/Wei came from behind to win three sets in a row and sealed the victory of Cambridge Men's Firsts. As the final rally concluded, Cambridge supporters threw their arms in the air and roared with delight.

Result: Cambridge beat Oxford 6-4

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