



Ackworth double up at ESTTA finals

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Ackworth School took two trophies as the Butterfly ESTTA team champions were crowned.

The 51st year of the event, held at the new Hinckley Leisure Centre, saw schools compete for supremacy in boys' and girls' events at Under-11, Under-13, Under-16 and Under-19.

And Ackworth School in Pontefract, home of the Table Tennis England Talent Academy, lived up to billing by winning both Under-16 trophies.

Off the tables, there was a presentation to outgoing ESTTA Chairman John Blackband after 28 years in the position – and he was delighted to see Wood Green Academy from Wednesbury, where he used to be a teacher and still coaches, win the Under-13 Girls' crown.

Under-11 Girls



The champions from The Pilgrim School

Victory went to The Pilgrim School from Rochester, beating Cliffedale Primary (Grantham) and Old Clee Primary (Grimsby) 7-1 and then St Andrew's C of E Primary (Plymouth) 5-3 in the decider, making light of losing the first match to power into a 5-1 lead.

The team was Katie O'Dwyer, Amy Barrance, Lily Clarke and Scarlett Lennon.

Team No 1 Katie O'Dwyer said: "We're really happy, because we didn't expect it. We didn't think we would be first, but perseverance and teamwork helped us."

St Andrew's got to the final showdown courtesy of a 5-3 defeat of Old Clee and a 6-2 margin over Cliffedale.

Old Clee's 5-3 win over Cliffedale saw them bag third place, with Jasmine Grindle's five-set defeat of Chloe Moore proving the clincher.

Under-13 Girls

ESTTA Chairman John Blackband was a happy man as Wood Green Academy took the title with three wins out of three.

Blackband, who is standing down from his ESTTA role at the end of the season, coaches at the school, where he was a head of year prior to retirement.

And the team of Amillia Baker, Kirsty Maull, Amelia Clynes and Kunashe Chidziya did him proud with 5-3 victories over The Pingle School (Swadlincote) and Burlington Danes Academy (Hammersmith) followed by a 7-1 scoreline against Wade Deacon High School (Widnes).

Burlington Danes were second, with 5-3 wins over Wade Deacon and The Pingle, while Wade Deacon's 6-2 triumph over The Pingle saw them in third.

Amillia said: "It feels great to win. Everybody in the team played their part and we did it for Mr Blackband."

Under-16 Girls



The Ackworth School squad

Ackworth Girls emulated their boys' squad by taking the title with three wins from three.

A squad featuring England trio Mollie Patterson, Jasmin Wong and Ruby Chan, ably backed up by Harriet Greenwood and Emily Greenwood, beat Okehampton Community College and Lancaster Girls' Grammar 6-2 and Burlington Danes Academy (Hammersmith) 8-0.

Mollie Patterson said: "We're very happy to win the title, it's important to us and the school.

"We understand that we have three players of very good standard but we need four in the team and we couldn't have done it without Emily and Harriet."

Okehampton were second thanks to matching 6-2 triumphs over Lancaster and Burlington.

Third was decided by a thrilling end to the match between Lancaster and Burlington Danes. The former entered the final match 4-3 up but Ayjah Mirjah-Mercer took a 2-0 lead over Eve Clement to put Burlington in sight of a draw. However, Clement came back strongly to win it 3-2 (9-11, 8-11, 11-9, 12-10, 11-9) and seal a 5-3 overall scoreline.

Under-19 Girls



The winning team with ESTTA Chairman John Blackband

Tudor Grange Academy from Solihull took the title, winning both their matches after the late withdrawal of holders Harefield Academy left only three teams in the event.

Represented by sisters Lisa and Sophie Rinnhofer, Tudor Grange beat Bradford Grammar 5-0 and then Horsforth School from Leeds 4-1.

Horsforth won the battle of the Yorkshire schools 3-2 against Bradford to take second spot, Sammy Parker winning both her matches and combining with Eden Philpott to take the doubles in five.

Sophie, 12, said: "I'm quite surprised. We didn't really expect to win and I'm really happy about it."

Lisa, 16, said: "We were quite nervous at first but in every qualifying round we got a bit more confidence. We didn't expect to win today though."

Under-11 Boys



The winners from St Peter's

St Peter's C of E Primary Academy (East Bridgford, Nottingham) won the title but had to fight hard to win two matches 5-3 and draw the third 4-4.

The line-up of Georgio Gerakios, Matthew Perry, Cameron Driver, Ben Firth and Jamie Millward had to come from 3-2 down to claim their first match against Ashburnham Primary (Chelsea), for whom Harry Derecki won both his matches.

And St Peter's were grateful to Ben Firth for confirming their 5-3 win over Barnes Primary (Richmond upon Thames) in match 8, coming from 2-0 down to defeat Qais Kamaraldin 3-2 (7-11, 5-11, 12-10, 11-5, 11-8).

Final opponents Great Wood Primary (Morecambe) needed a win to lift the title themselves but in the event it finished 4-4 as Cameron Driver won the crucial seventh match 3-2 (3-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-8, 14-12) against Adam Dennison to put St Peter's 4-3 up.

Matthew Perry said: "It's amazing. I think our teamwork was incredible and we fought to the end. We also had a very good team in depth."

The draw with St Peter's was good enough for Great Wood to finish in second, having beaten Ashburnham 6-2 and drawn 4-4 with Barnes – who fought back from 2-0, 3-2 and 4-3 down, Mohamed Larbi taking the crucial eighth match.

Barnes' 5-3 win over Ashburnham put them in third.

Under-13 Boys



The winning squad from St Mary's College

St Mary's College (Hull) are champions thanks to three 5-3 wins. Their squad consisted of Che Goulbourne, Ehsan Jawadi, Zac Foston, Ashton Innes and Sean McGuinness.

There were three five-setters as they beat University College School (Camden) 5-3, including a fightback from 2-0 down by Innes against Josh Imber (7-11, 10-12, 11-8, 12-10, 11-8), which crucially put the victors 3-1 ahead.

It was also 5-3 to St Mary's against Ernest Bevin College (Tooting Bec), although Kamal Annich caught the eye for the losing side with a comeback 3-2 (11-13, 10-12, 15-13, 16-14, 11-6) victory over Goulbourne in one of the matches of the day.

Another 5-3 match, against Longfield Academy (Darlington), completed the title triumph for St Mary's.

Che Goulbourne said of their success: "It's a good experience to win. We developed as a team and showed belief that we could win it and we all showed good support for each other."

UCS and Longfield Academy shared a thrilling 4-4 draw, with both sides winning 14 sets apiece and UCS only coming out on top by 236 points to 233. They were also 2-0 and 4-2 down, and Ben Barbarash won match No 7 3-2 (11-6, 11-9, 10-12, 12-14, 12-10) and Joe Abrahams then levelled.

With both UCS and Longfield having beaten Ernest Bevin 5-3, that countback proved crucial in determining UCS in second place overall.

Worthy of special mention is Thomas Rayner of Longfield, who has won all 18 matches across the qualifying events and finals, all without dropping a set.

Under-16 Boys



The Ackworth squad

Ackworth's powerful quartet of Shayan Siraj, Jamie Liu, Sam Chesterman and Reece Chamdal swept all before them, dropping only three sets all day – one each by the top three.

Budmouth College (Weymouth), Range High School (Formby) and Ernest Bevin College (Tooting Bec) all fell 8-0 to the Pontefract powerhouse.

Shayan Siraj said: "We performed well. Our expectations were quite high and we dealt with the pressure well."

Ernest Bevin were second, beating Range 6-2 and drawing 4-4 with Budmouth, who led three times but then had to come from 4-3 down to secure a point, Tom Lydford beating Adam Benmohamed in the eighth match.

The match between The Range and Budmouth also finished 4-4, Lydford again winning the final match to ensure his school were third.

Under-19 Boys



The Whitgift School line-up

Whitgift School won the battle of the top two against Harefield Academy, both sides having won their previous two matches 8-0.

Harefield had swept past Beckfoot School (Bingley) without dropping a set, and beat Cardinal Newman College (Preston) for the loss of only three sets.

Whitgift dropped three against Cardinal Newman and two against Beckfoot – when Jason Kwok came from 2-0 down in match 8 to win 3-2.

The final clash resulted in a 5-3 scoreline in favour of Whitgift (Croydon), though Harefield winning the last two matches put a gloss on the scoreline.

The Whitgift squad was James Smith, George Hazell, Reiss Vydelingum and Jason Kwok and crucial to the cause was James Smith's 3-2 win over Gaurav Aravind in the second match to put his side 2-0 up.

Smith said: "I'm very happy to win, not just for myself but for the whole team because a lot of them haven't had national success before, so it's amazing for all of us.

"I think beating Gaurav was influential because it gave us momentum for the rest of the match – 2-0 up and 1-1 are very different."

Cardinal Newman overcame Beckfoot 6-2 to claim third place overall, including a standout 3-2 victory for Oliver Garmston in match 2, defeating Will Nash (5-11, 11-9, 12-14, 12-10, 14-12).



John Blackband (right) is presented with a memento from ESTTA President John Arnold

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