



## Trent's Doran wins the battle of the universities at Nottingham Grand Prix

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Darius Knight (L) and Chris Doran (R) with Chairman of Table Tennis England Sandra Deaton

### Men's Singles

On Saturday the University of Nottingham was celebrating student Adam Harrison's success in the men's band 1 event but on Sunday the tables had turned as former Nottingham Trent University student Chris Doran stole into the David Ross Sports Village and picked up the Men's Singles title from under his university rivals' noses.

The Northants player, still in contention for the overall season's title, rekindled memories of a successful university career by battling through the entry in Nottingham which included fellow England internationals David McBeath, Danny Reed and Darius Knight.

Doran started with his usual casual yet accomplished style in the groups – easily despatching David Ramsey, Tim Denby and Jack Josephs in straight sets to progress to the round of 32 as the second seed.

It was a story concurrent across the rest of the field as all of the seeded players in the men's singles were able to comfortably progress. McBeath, Reed, Knight, Kawai and Akindiya all made the last 32 without any alarms. In fact, the first upset of the day really only came when Julius Esposito defeated Josh Harland, yesterday's band 1 finalist, 3-2 (12-10, 8-11, 6-11, 11-6, 11-7).

If it wasn't for the run of young Ethan Walsh, who was runner-up in his group to Amirul Hussain, but recovered to beat both Naphat Boonyaprapa (3-2) and 12th seed Garth Kinlocke 3-1 (10-12, 11-8, 11-8, 11-5) to reach the last 16 then all of the places at that stage would've been taken up by the group winners and top seeded individuals.

Arguably Doran then had the toughest schedule to reach the final. First he had to defeat 14th seed Adeoye Adewale 3-0 (11-3, 11-9, 11-5), then 5th seed Ryota Kawai 3-0 (11-8, 11-7, 13-11) before also overcoming 4th seed Danny Reed 3-1 (7-11, 13-11, 14-12, 11-9) in the semi-finals. Reed, earlier having beaten Rory Scott, James Hobson and Ismaila Akindiya while dropping just a single end.

On the other side of the draw, top seed McBeath beat Costas Papantoniou 3-0 before triumphing in an entertaining affair with Josh Bennett 3-1 (8-11, 11-6, 11-4, 13-11) and finally Adam Harrison 3-0 to set up a semi-final meeting with Darius Knight who had seen off Martin Matuzevicius, Matthew Leete and Callum Evans all in four ends.

The start of the Knight v McBeath semi-final was a case of missed opportunities for both players. McBeath leading 10-9 in the first only to concede it 10-12 before Knight was equally as guilty in surrendering a game point at 11-10 in the second to eventually lose it 12-14. The following two games were traded by less dramatic scores – Knight taking a 2-1 lead 11-9 before McBeath levelled matters 11-5 – setting up a conclusive deciding end.

Although Knight raced into a 6-0 lead, McBeath showed courage to drive back into matters at 5-8, however, the margin proved too much in the end as Knight secured a berth in the final 11-7.

With the top two seeds despatched in the semi-finals, Doran and Knight proved how competitive table tennis on the British circuit can still be. This wasn't necessarily evident between the pair in the first set of the final which Doran dominated 11-4, but a fightback from the Surrey player in the second game had him on course to level matters with a 10-8 lead.

However, perhaps crucially, Doran was able to win the next four consecutive points and snatch away a 2-0 lead. Although Knight pulled a game back 11-8 in the third, you could sense that second game has caused more damage than just to the scoreline. Sure enough, not long after, Doran wrapped up the Nottingham title with an 11-4 fourth game to mark a successful return to the Nottingham University campus for the former Trent player.



Karina Le Fevre (L) and Jenny Liu (R)

### Women's Singles

Haoyu (Jenny) Liu beat Karina Le Fevre in the women's singles final to leave the race for the top spot in the overall season standings wide open with just one full grand prix event left (London 20-21st May).

Le Fevre, who held a 44 point lead before the weekend, saw her opponent close in once again on her position following a her second final defeat of the grand prix season to Liu who had previously beaten her in Tipton.

Liu, beginning the Nottingham Grand Prix as the top seed, won her three-player group with relative ease, seeing off English juniors Emily Bolton 3-0 (12-10, 11-6, 15-13) and Kate Cheer 3-1 (11-7, 8-11, 11-6, 11-8). She then wasted no time in defeating Welsh cadet Anna Hursey 3-0 (11-3, 11-3, 11-4) but found the going much tougher against Staffordshire girl, and yesterday's band 2 winner and band 1 runner-up, Charlotte Bardsley who she almost fell 2-0 down to. Having lost the first game 11-6, she trailed 7-10 in the second, but won five consecutive points to turn the tide of the match.

Visibly disturbed by the loss of the set, Bardsley was unable to regroup as Liu took control of the momentum. That game, followed by two quick 11-3 games sealed her place in the final at her home university venue in Nottingham.

Her opponent in the final was Cleveland player Karina Le Fevre who made quick work of her group contenders Beth Richards (3-0) and Erin Thompson (3-0) before delivering the same swift justice to her knockout stage opponents Yolanda King 3-0 (11-9, 11-8, 11-7) and Hannah Hicks 3-0 (11-5, 11-6, 11-7) to impressively stride to the final meeting.

However, just like at Tipton, Liu proved too much for Le Fevre and her win in three straight games opened up the women's season title with just three tournaments left.



Julius Esposito (L) and Rory Scott (R)

### Veterans' Singles

Julius Esposito was ruthless in the veterans' singles event as he stormed to the title without dropping a single end in Nottingham.

The Phillipino was in fine form all weekend, just missing out on the band 2 title on Saturday with a close 3-2 (11-8, 12-10, 11-13, 9-11, 11-6) defeat to Shaquille Webb-Dixon, but continued his steady progress into Sunday's veterans event which he dominated from start to finish.

In his groups he defeated Yury Zhelyabouskiy 3-0 (11-7, 11-3, 11-5), Simon Griew 3-0 (11-5, 11-8, 12-10) and Tony Reynolds 3-0 (11-3, 11-8, 11-6) before winning his semi-final with Rajinder Singh 3-0 (11-4, 11-3, 11-6). The final with Rory Scott proved no different, a 3-0 (11-4, 11-5, 11-3) victory completing what was a very comfortable afternoon's work.

His final opponent, Scott, did have a more interesting route. After winning his group over Helmuth Osborne and Minesh Pitamber, he needed to rescue two match points against Simon Griew in his semi-final 3-2 (11-7, 8-11, 5-11, 11-6, 12-10).



Liam McTiernan and Danny Reed (L) and Ismaila Akindiya and Adeoye Adewale with Sandra Deaton

### Open Doubles

The open doubles was a small entry but nevertheless provided host university Nottingham with some cheer as their students Danny Reed and Liam McTiernan emerged victorious out of the round robin event.

With just three matches spanning the course of the doubles competition even the opening fixtures had added importance as they effectively acted as semi-finals. Reed and McTiernan made their presence felt with a 3-0 (11-9, 11-5, 11-6) win over Joe Killoran and Josh Stacey, while Ismaila Akindiya and Adeoye Adewale won a close second game against Killoran/Stacey 3-2 (11-9, 9-11, 11-3, 9-11, 11-8) to set up a showdown for the title.

The Nottingham students started strongly and took the opening two games but a fightback from Akindiya and Adewale in games three and four made for an exciting finale. Ultimately the Notts pair would keep their cool and deliver another grand prix prize for their home venue this weekend.

## Men's Under-21s

Matthew Leete took a big step towards end of the season honours as he won the men's under-21 event at the penultimate grand prix of the 2016/17 season to move ahead of rival Callum Evans in the rankings.

With a large entry at Nottingham there were plenty of points on offer, especially as both players entered to compete in Nottingham – Evans starting as the top seed and Leete in third.

Leete ensured himself of smooth progress to the business end of the tournament with group victories over Ethan Chapman (3-0), Sam Chesterman (3-0) and Naphat Boonyaprapa (3-0). He then saw off the challenge of Joe Clark 3-1 (11-7, 4-11, 11-7, 11-7) before beating both of the Bennett boys back-to-back – first Jack 3-1 (7-11, 11-4, 11-6, 11-9) and then Josh in the semi-finals 3-2 (11-8, 7-11, 13-11, 17-19, 11-9) – a match that included a number of missed match point opportunities in game four.

Title rival Evans, meanwhile, won his group with Adam Jepson and Mihnea Dascalu although he was pushed all the way by Jepson in a 3-2 (11-5, 10-12, 11-6, 5-11, 12-10) win. But, in the first round of the knockout stages he fell to Amirul Hussain 3-1 (5-11, 11-5, 11-8, 18-16) to open up the race for first place and the prize money come London Grand Prix.

This allowed allow Ethan Walsh to power into the final. The Hertfordshire cadet beat Joe Clark, Quentin Kwan and Joel Webb in his group before also performing strongly to overcome Martin Matuzevicius (3-0), Shaquille Webb-Dixon (3-1), Amirul Hussain (3-0) and James Hobson (3-0) to secure a final place.

The final itself was competitive throughout with Walsh responding to Leete's opening game with an 11-5 set of his own. However, that was as close as Walsh got to the Lincolnshire player as Leete took the fourth 11-8 and kept calm in a tight fifth 13-11 to pick up another under-21s title.

While Leete took the headlines by moving into first place in the standings, Walsh also moved up in the rankings, with a chance still to finish in the money positions at the end of the campaign.



Mollie Patterson (L) and Kate Cheer (R)

### Women's Under-21s

Mollie Patterson won her first women's under-21s title at the Nottingham Grand Prix with a comprehensive final victory over Kate Cheer. The Norfolk player hadn't entered the tournament previously this season but may consider more outings following her successful campaign at the David Ross Sports Village.

Patterson's route to the final included opening group victories over Patricia Ianau 3-1 (11-7, 11-8, 4-11, 11-5) and Beth Richards 3-0 (11-6, 11-6, 11-2) before the Norfolk youngster defeated Irish player Emma Ludlow 3-1 (6-11, 11-5, 11-8, 13-11) in her quarter-final and Welsh cadet Anna Hursey 3-1 (11-8, 13-11, 5-11, 11-8) in the semi-final.

Cheer had a simple task in her group with Raquel Sao Pedro dropping out leaving just Lauren Evans in her way – a obstacle she duly obliged to removing 3-1 (11-8, 5-11, 11-1, 11-6) before also dishing out a quick 3-0 victory in a straightforward win over Ireland's Erin Thompson.

Her opponent in the semi-final was in-form Charlotte Bardsley who had just beaten Beth Richards 3-2 (11-2, 9-11, 6-11, 11-8, 11-5) but who couldn't quite last the pace with Cheer as another five-set match would this time result in her defeat. A 3-2 (11-6, 9-11, 5-11, 11-8, 11-9) win booking the Sussex juniors place in the final.

Although the final was competitive throughout, it was Patterson who led each of the three games and just kept herself a comfortable margin ahead of Cheer to secure the top prize. As long as her nerve held, which it did, there was nothing to stop her picking up this first under-21s gong.

### 2017 Nottingham Grand Prix Results

#### Men's Singles

Chris Doran bt Darius Knight 3-1 (11-4, 12-10, 8-11, 11-4)

#### Women's Singles

Jenny Liu bt Karina Le Fevre 3-0 (11-8, 11-8, 11-6)

**Veterans' Singles**

Julius Esposito bt Rory Scott 3-0 (11-4, 11-5, 11-3)

**Open Doubles**

Reed/McTiernan won round robin, Akindiya/Adewale runner-up

**Men's Under-21s**

Matthew Leete bt Ethan Walsh 3-1 (11-9, 5-11, 11-8, 13-11)

**Women's Under-21s**

Mollie Patterson bt Kate Cheer 3-0 (11-9, 11-7, 11-7)

Entries are now being taken for season finale in London, on 20th & 21st May. You can enter [here](#).

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