



Cippenham Junior 4*: Hee, Kerr among champions

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There were no local winners at the weekend's third running of the Cippenham Junior 4-Star Championships but, nevertheless, the event was a great success for the local table tennis club, attracting a high quality entry from around the country.

Only one of the four titles was defended and Joseph Hee, the top seed, made short work of retaining his Cadet Boys' Singles title. The Singaporean, a recent addition to the British table tennis scene, dropped only one game, and that in the final to Louis Price, as he chopped and counter attacked his way majestically through the field.

Six of the eight seeded players made it through to their allotted places in the quarter-finals. The other two were eliminated one round earlier: Zaiim Premji by Edan Regan and Branislav Zivkovic by Louie Evans after Zivkovic led 2-0.

Three of the four quarter-finals went according to seeding. Hee beat fifth seed Maxim Stevens, third seed Price beat Regan after overcoming a 2-0 games deficit and second seed Aadil Anand ended the run of Evans. However, sixth seed Joseph Roberts upset the form book by putting out fourth seed Benjamin Hee.



Joseph Hee

Hee was too good for Roberts in the top semi-final but Price's 3-1 win over Anand was a real gutsy affair and the margins were tighter. In the final itself, Price extended the match by taking the third game but Hee was in control otherwise and won the fourth game easily.

The final of the Cadet Girls' Singles was fought out by the top two seeds. However, it was second seed Gemma Kerr, from Devon, who won the event over Amelia Chan, despite dropping the first game. The scores were then switched completely as Kerr eased her way to the title.

Both finalists had met unseeded players in their semi-finals. Chan had an almighty struggle to beat Mari Baldwin and needed all her resources to recover from 2-0 down. Kerr, on the other hand, found Anaya Patel a little easier and won 3-0.

To get to those semi-final positions, Baldwin had beaten Ilyssa Lacorte who, beforehand, had eliminated the third seed Beth Richards, while Patel beat the other seed from Wales, Lara Whitton.

On Sunday, attention switched from the cadet to the junior events and it was the turn for some of the older players to enter the fray.

Zahna Hall is the most successful player of all over the three times the Cippenham Junior 4-Star Open has been played. Junior Girls' Singles champion in November 2015 and runner-up in September 2016, Hall regained the title this time around. Her victim in the final was Amelia Chan who thus finished as the losing finalist in both the cadet and junior events.



Zahna Hall

Hall was involved in one of the best matches of the weekend in her semi-final against Tiana Dennison. Hall eventually won 3-2 (11-8, 13-15, 12-14, 11-9, 11-9) after a match that had most of the large gathering of players and coaches enthralled. Chan's victory over Mari Baldwin at the same stage, however, was much easier than it had been the day before.

Baldwin had had her moment of glory two rounds earlier as she eliminated second seed Sarah Menghistab by an unlikely scoreline that, although 3-2, included four games that were won by a margin of seven points or

more!

The tournament concluded with the Junior Boys' Singles. Seven of the eight seeds made it through to their quarter-final. The absentee was sixth seed Gustav Aravind who was beaten by Sammy Kaye one round earlier. Top seed James Smith then made short work of Kaye while eighth seed Josh Millman put out third seed George Hazell. Fourth seed Israel Awolaja, after losing the first game, was eventually too strong for seventh seed Edward Haskell and second seed Joseph Hee eased past fifth seed Carl Baldry.

The bottom of the draw pitched together two players who rely on a defensive style with a fierce follow-up attack on the forehand, unusual in modern table tennis. After losing the first game, Awolaja recovered to beat Hee 3-1 and deservedly booked his place in the final where he would meet top seed James Smith who beat Millman 3-1 in his semi. Smith took the first two games of the final 11-9, 11-4 but Awolaja hit back and led 9-3 in the third game. However, Smith was not finished and increased his power which, coupled with a few errors from Awolaja, saw him complete the comeback 12-10 and with it secure the title.



James Smith

Cippenham Table Tennis Club would like to thank the large army of volunteers who made this prestigious event possible, including the band of thirteen umpires. Referee Steve Smith and his deputy Mike Atkinson kept the tournament moving while the tireless Ken Phillips collated all the entries. Graham Trimming took and published a large album of photographs (available on the Cippenham TTC Flickr site).

Results:

	Winner:	Runner-up:
Junior Boys' Singles	James Smith (Kent)	Israel Awolaja (Middx)
Junior Girls' Singles	Zahna Hall (Middx)	Amelia Chan Middx)
Cadet Boys' Singles	Joseph Hee (Essex)	Louis Price (Avon)
Cadet Girls' Singles	Gemma Kerr Devon)	Amelia Chan (Middx)

Junior Boys' Plate
Junior Girls' Plate
Cadet Boys' Plate
Cadet Girls' Plate

Jack O'Duffy (Wales)
Jasmine Williams (Hants)
Marcus Holba (Gloucs)
Grace Clement (Wales)

Kwan Kin Tang (Middx)
Ilyssa Lacorte (Herts)
Herbie Sage (Devon)
Alana Mansfield (Essex)

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