



Young medallists delighted with their success

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Our Cadet & Junior National Champions and medallists have been reacting to their achievements at Medway Park over the weekend.

Cadet singles titles went to Ethan Walsh and Charlotte Bardsley on day one and the Junior titles on day two were won by Tom Jarvis and Denise Payet.

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Reactions

The two girls were arguably the stars of the event as they both won three gold medals – Payet adding girls' doubles with Kate Cheer and mixed with James Smith, while Bardsley won the doubles with Megan Gidney and the team event with Burton Uxbridge, alongside Gidney and Mollie Patterson.

Bardsley, who beat Gidney in the singles final, said:

“Megan’s a really great doubles partner, we have great chemistry, so it was hard to play the final against her. She’s a good friend but I managed to win it. We won the team event last year so it’s good to reclaim the title. Megan really sealed the win and Mollie’s win was crucial, so it was a good team effort.”

Payet, who also beat Gidney in her singles final, said:

"My aim was to win all three and I'm so happy it came true. I tried to keep my head and not get annoyed with myself, and just relax and play like I know I can – and it seemed to get me all three!"

For France-based Gidney, who hails from Bolton, there was the satisfaction at winning some Nationals medals at last – doubles and team gold and two singles silvers.

Gidney said:

"I'm happy because I've had a tough few years at Nationals and they've never really gone how I wanted them to go and I've finally won something. I just kept concentrating, never gave up and kept believing I could win."

For the boys, it was over and out with a win for Tom Jarvis, who will move into Seniors before next year's competition.

Jarvis said:

"I didn't feel at my best and I really had to battle through all my singles matches – no one was easy. But even though I wasn't at my best level, my head was strong and helped me to get through the day. I'm happy to win the singles, it's the best way to finish my junior career in England."

The beaten finalist was Matt Leete, who ended with silvers from the mixed doubles and team event and gold in the boys' doubles with Josh Bennett.

Leete said:

"I was happy with how I played in the early rounds and I raised my game after that, but it wasn't quite enough to beat Tom. The best player won, but I'm obviously disappointed not to get the title. It seems like I've improved in the last year and put my training to good use – I just need a bit more to get over the line."

Ethan Walsh, who beat Amirul Hussain in the cadet singles final said:

"It's probably my biggest event of the year. At points I wasn't playing my best but I had to keep fighting and push through. In the final my hard work paid off and I started playing better and was more relaxed."

One of the other performances of the weekend was undoubtedly Artur Caltabiano's bronze in the Junior singles as he overcame higher-ranked Israel Awolaja in the groups and then defeated fourth seed Bennett and Joe Clark before bowing out to Jarvis in the semi-finals.

Caltabiano said:

"It's unreal, I just can't put it into words. I was hoping to get out of the group and maybe give Josh a good game, but to beat him and go on to beat Joe Clark was insane. It's got to be the best day of my table tennis career – getting to the semi-finals of the Junior Nationals doesn't happen every day."

James Smith ended up with two golds – in mixed doubles and team – and a silver in the boys' doubles, having beaten top seeds Tom Jarvis & Luke Savill in the quarters.

Smith said:

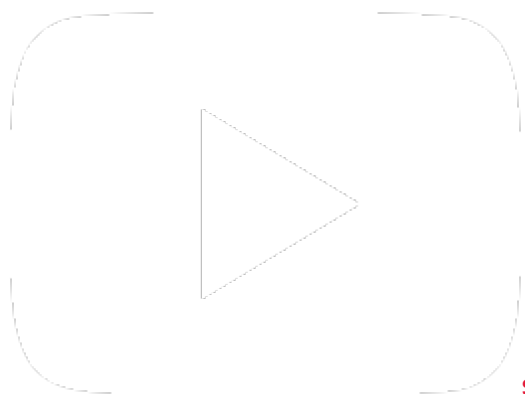
“Two gold medals and a silver’s not bad! We thought we could win the mixed but being seeded three, it’s still an unexpected win, so we’re very happy. For me and Ethan, beating Tom Jarvis and Luke Savill is probably one of the best results of our careers. We just tried to stop them from playing and take any chances they gave us.”

There was also a bronze in the singles for Zahna Hall, who closes her Junior career.

Hall said:

“I’m happy but sad at the same time. It’s my last Nationals, so of course I wanted to win, but I’m grateful that I’ve achieved a bronze. A loss is a lesson learned, not the end of the world.”

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