

Spink & Bryant are first time Champions

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Craig Bryant (Sx) winner of Men's Open with Richard Andrews (Bk) (right) runner up.

Lauren Spink and Craig Bryant were crowned Briar Medway Grand Prix Open Champions with both players winning their respective Open Singles titles at a Grand Prix for the first time after several close attempts over the years, and this was achieved on Sunday the 5th of September 2010 at the newly re-furbished Medway Centre in Gillingham, Kent.

Huge congratulations go to "Spinny Spinky – the Wensum Wonder" as she is affectionately called locally in Norfolk. Spectators surrounded the centre court and were treated to a masterclass display of top Women's table tennis in the final between top seeds Egle Adomelyte S1 from Middlesex and Lauren Spink S2, with the Norfolk star winning her maiden Championship victory after a comeback to table tennis six months ago. I am pretty sure that the majority in the audience were absolutely astounded and thrilled by the way she played against Egle, none more so than her faithful coach Mark Dare together with her parents who witnessed her remarkable performance. Lauren was totally in the zone throughout to outplay Egle (a regular Grand Prix winner) in straight sets. Her dynamic movement around the court getting to every ball looking for attacking opportunities to produce heavy spin on both wings combined with her variation of serves tight returns but most important was that steely eyed look of sheer determination that said it all. Egle is a battle hardened dour competitor that has played at the top level but she could only play second fiddle to the awesome drive and resolve that Lauren possesses. Only Charleigh Kirby managed to take a game off the Champion during the entire event and that in the group stage. Lauren felled off all her opponents that included Tanya Waller, Kirsty Wilson, Charleigh Kirby, semi finalist Su West (who managed just 12 points against her) and then blew away Egle in the last match.

Praise must also be heaped on Craig Bryant S1 for winning the Men's Open in gritty style particularly against tough semi final opponent Stephen Jenkins who took him all the way to a five game spectacular that neither player deserved to lose. This match was packed with top class rallies that the crowd lapped up with the Welshman losing 7-11 in the fifth game. Craig's final opponent Richard Andrews put up some resistance but was probably cream crackered after his epic and nail biting full distance superb semi final performance over top seed John Murphy. In the final Craig was just awesome and always in control being just too clever for the Junior International Andrews, to take his first ever Grand Prix Men's Open title that he has come so close to winning in previous years.

Richard Andrews seeded at four for the tournament played supremely well to reach his first ever Grand Prix Men's final having to fight off opponents the calibre of Abdul Wuraola, John Holland then his colossal encounter with tournament favourite John Murphy (who had an early fright and possibly one of the best five set all action matches of the day against Rory Scott) but came up against the vastly experienced Bryant who was just a bridge too far.

Later in the day Annabelle Morle won the eight player entry of the Women's under 21 event. However she was taken all the way and had to survive no less than four match points DOWN in her group stage against Charlotte Spencer (who you had to feel for) to come through as group winner. She then endured another five game marathon against Kirsty Wilson (runner up in group 2) at the last four stage to await her last opponent. That turned out to be 13 year old Emma Torkington who had to be at her very best to thwart the persistent challenge from another thirteen year old Chrissie Slot who saw a possible semi final victory just slip from her grasp being at 2-1 up in games and holding two match points at 10 – 8 up in the fourth leg. Chrissie had played brilliantly to come through as group winner enjoying a 3-0 win over higher ranked and the more experienced Kirsty Wilson and with that experience under her belt will surely give her confidence that anything is possible in table tennis! Emma Torkington then faced Annabelle, seven years her senior performing well in the final but the Hampshire top seed proved just the more steadier and experienced at the vital points to take her second ever Under 21's title.

Richard Andrews gained some compensation for his earlier defeat in the Men's final to run out a comfortable winner in the Under 21 Men's category. Richard proved too strong for the likes of Philip Thomas, Bradley Tuttle and his final opponent Mark Scutts. Alex Holland, and Tony Zeqiri both played very well but lost out to Scutts in the latter stages.

Two lefties in the form of John Holland and Chris "banter" Bartram entertained everyone in the hall with a top class display full of trickery and excellent rallies in the final of the Veteran Singles, with John taking a 3-1 title victory. Losing semi finalists Steve Kerns and Keith Falconer also provided huge entertainment throughout this closely fought contest.

Last but by no means least the final event on a busy weekend was the Restricted Singles event with the final fought out between top seeds Craig Bryant and Brad Evans. Craig topped off a memorable weekend by taking his third event after earlier winning the Men's Band 1, Men's Open and now the Restricted singles with a 3-1 final score. Very well done Craig- a magnificent hat trick- did you keep the match ball as a souvenir?

The Bribar "player of the tournament award" was won by Jurate Brazaityte who played brilliantly throughout the two day weekend.

A vote of thanks to all the officials on duty that included Referee Steve Smith, deputy Jim Kenny, referee's assistant Steve Smith snr, tournament organisers Matt Morris and Zak Ferris together with Neil Curtis, Alan White and Derick Sidaway, the boys in blue.

The next scheduled Grand Prix will be the Bribar Peterborough GP on the 9/10th of October.



Egle Adomelyte (Mi) left runner up with Lauren Spink (right) winner of Women's Bribar Women's Medway Open

Results from day 2 at Medway.

Men's Open

Craig Bryant (Sx) beat Richard Andrews (Bk) 11-8, 11-5, 11-4.

Women's Open.

Lauren Spink (Nk) beat Egle Adomelyte (Mi) 11-2, 11-7, 14-12.

Under 21 Men.

Richard Andrews (Bk) beat Mark Scutts 11-4, 11-8, 11-6.

Under 21 Women

Annabelle Morle (Ha) beat Emma Torkington (Sx) 11-9, 11-6, 12-10.

Veteran Singles.

John Holland (Dy) beat Chris Bartram (K) 10-12, 11-5, 12-10, 11-4.

Restricted Singles.

Craig Bryant (Sx) beat Brad Evans (Bu) 11-8, 11-13, 11-8, 11-8.

By Geoff Ware

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