



Chelmsford & District: Taylor and Edwards take titles

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The M&G Investments Chelmsford & District Table Tennis League Finals Night at Old Chelmsfordians Association on saw Duncan Taylor crowned as Men's Singles champion for the first time whilst 16-year-old Gracie Edwards was a very worthy first-time winner of the Ladies' Singles.

The evening began with a Men's semi-final victory for Taylor against Essex Junior star Sam Hume. The match turned on the first end. There was never much in it but when Taylor shaded it 16-14 it was the boost he needed. He won the second comfortably 11-4 and although the third and was much closer Taylor kept his nose in front to seal victory 11-7.

In the second Men's Singles semi-final top seed Trevor Lloyd prevailed over four ends against the hard-hitting Wale Bada. Wale hit some stunning forehand winners but Lloyd refused to be phased by it. He dealt well with Wale's tricky serves and blocked a fair number of Wale's savage forehand hits back for outright winners of his own. Lloyd won 11-8, 11-7, 9-11, 11-8.

Taylor and Charles Sweeny became the seventh different pairing to win the Men's Doubles in seven years. Taylor – more defensive than attacking – and Sweeny – the most stylish of attackers – are a well-honed partnership. Taylor doesn't venture too far from the table in doubles and Sweeny gives little away.

They won the first game 11-6 against Paul Davison and Gary Young and although there was nothing in it in the second and third ends Charles and Duncan shaded both games 11-9, 11-9.

There was consolation in the Under-21 Singles final for 17-year-old Sam Hume, who won the title for a third successive time. His opponent, 13-year-old Daniel Young, displayed bags of promise for the future and as the game progressed he became more and more assured. However, Sam remained in control to win 3-0 (11-5, 11-6, 11-9).

The Veterans' Singles final paired Trevor Lloyd with Duncan Taylor – the same final as the Men's Singles – by no means a unique occurrence but pretty rare all the same.

Taylor made the early running and he won the first end comfortably 11-5. Lloyd upped the ante considerably and won the second and third ends 11-6, 12-10 only for Taylor to sneak home in the fourth 11-8. This match was now too close to call but it was Lloyd who stayed ahead in the fifth end to win. He was always just ahead and he finally clinched victory 11- 9.

Julie Johnson and Ryan Gooday had impressed last year by winning the Mixed Doubles title. And they played equally well this year. It was Jan Fuller and Paul Davison who win the first end 11-7 but it was Julie and Ryan who came good in games two, three and four. With Ryan's fierce backhand topspin enticing mistakes from his opponents, Ryan and Julie won the next three 11-4, 11-8, 11-8.

The Ladies Singles' final paired twice champion Dawn Baldry with the hard-hitting Gracie Edwards. Gracie was a revelation in the first end and, hitting with enormous power on the backhand, she raced home 11-1. Dawn is no quitter and she fought back strongly in both the second and third ends. However, Gracie had no intention of being denied and she came through to win them 11-9, 11-9.

The Men's final enabled older players to ask the question who the last defensive winner of the Men's Singles was. Chelmsford legend Charlie Wheeler was certainly in that category, whilst it was alleged that Tony Condon was also something of a defensive player.

Duncan Taylor decided to attack more in this final and it paid dividends as 13 times West Wiltshire Men's Singles champion Trevor Lloyd not only had to cope with repeated topspin forays but Taylor also seemed to find that little bit extra in the rallies where he was well away from the table. Taylor won an excellent match 3-1 (11-9, 11-5, 9-11, 11-5) – his first Chelmsford Men's Singles title to add to his wins in the Burnham League in 2014 and 2015.

The League would like to thank the Mayor and Mayoress Councillor Duncan Lumley and Mrs Edna Lumley for attending the Finals Night as well as M&G Investments for their very generous sponsorship of the event. M&G Investments were represented by Mrs Anna Emtage – Charity and Community Relations Manager – and her colleague Geoff Curd.

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