

The Euro Mini Championships were held in Schiltigheim, France from the 26th August until the 28th August 2011. England sent three promising young performers in Tom Jarvis (Lincolnshire), Luke Savill (Kent) and Alex Ramsden (Northamptonshire). Tom and Luke competed in the 1999 category (under 12s) and Alex competed in the 2000 category (under 11s).

The format of the tournament was for players to progress through a succession of four groups before reaching the main draw, if a player came last in their group or in any of their groups they would be entered into the consolation event. Both Luke and Alex had fantastic starts to the competition, winning their respective groups but Tom had a tough group even though he did get through the group in second place. In the second groups the English boys again showed some great performances, with Luke and Alex again coming through their groups in first position and Tom again getting drawn into another tough group but again moving forward to the next stage in convincing fashion.

All three players then moved on into the final group stage, first up was Alex Ramsden who had a tough group with an Italian and a French player. He showed great fighting spirit and determination to take an early 1-0 lead but the talented French player just had the better of Alex coming through 3-1. Next up was Alex's final group match against the Italian player, a well-fought match with long and tense rallies but again the Italian proving a little too strong for Alex. Alex later came up against a really strong and large under 11 Czech player in the consolation event, who proved a little too strong and powerful taking the match 3-0. Overall, a fantastic competition for Alex, with a few terrific wins under his belt and some lovely hand skills.

Luke Savill made it through to the final group stage undefeated and only dropping one set, he came up against a strong Russian player Iliya Isakov (who had reached the Quarter Final of the ITTF Hopes competition in Sweden), this match was without a doubt the best match of Luke's tournament with long topspin to topspin rallies. Luke found himself 2-1 down against the two-winged Russian but in set four he played what seemed the set of his life taking the set 11-4, with six forehand counter-topspins in a row! Luke continued this great run and found himself 8-5 up in the fifth set, after the Russian's timeout he came out swinging and eventually took the final set 11-9. Despite this loss, Luke fought through this final group to make it into the main draw. His top 16 finish came to an end in the next round where he came up against a very strong Lithuanian, losing out 3-1. Luke had a succession of wins after this and was fighting it out for 17th and 18th position. He was granted a chance to take revenge against Iliya Isakov (RUS) but this time the Russian cutting out many unforced errors and taking 17th position 3-0. Some fantastic matches and rallies from Luke, a great talent.

Tom Jarvis was our final player to play his fourth group, he'd made it through the majority of his groups in second place but this time Tom had different ideas. Tom came through his final group in first place in very convincing fashion, showing great speed and power, which proved too much for his opponents. Tom's next match was in the last 32 of the competition, he again showed great fight and determination and proceeded to the final 16. In the final 16 Tom came up against Fek from Romania, this proved to be a tough match and Tom fell 3-0 to the strong Romanian. With Tom losing this match it meant he came up against Wiltschka from Slovakia to play for positions 9-16. This was another revenge match, as this was Tom's first loss in the first group of the competition. The young Lincolnshire warrior came out of the blocks fast and didn't plan on stopping, he was rewarded and claimed his revenge 11-9 in the fifth set and

pleased the crowd with an impressive celebration by dropping to his knees! With another succession of wins along the way Tom found himself playing it out for 9th and 10th position against fellow Briton Chris Wheeler from Scotland. Tom once again had a great start and snatched the first set from Wheeler. Chris was determined not to go down to his English opponent and fought back to take the victory 3-1. Once again, some great performances from Tom, showing that he could be a real star for the future.

All three players complimented each other really well and each have their own attributes, Tom with his speed and power around the table, Alex with his great touch and feel and Luke with his well polished all-round game, changing the pace and direction all the time. Perhaps they could be the future England team.

Well done boys.

By Craig Bryant