



# Week commencing 03 May 2010

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**T**hursday 29<sup>th</sup> April saw the remaining Leamington titles decided, with the last seven events' finals being played at League HQ.

The first title went to Holly Thompson of Eathorpe, as she defeated Free Church's Jessica Champion in the Under 15 Girls final. Jessica made a good fight of it in the first, as Holly eventually pulled clear at the end to win 11-8, before Holly increased her level to take a 7-0 lead in the second set and went on to close it out 11-5. Jessica recovered well to make the third set more competitive, but ultimately Holly's superior power and experience was always going to win the day and she duly picked up the title 8, 5, 7.

The Grade 2 final was a family affair, with Charlotte Spencer (St Georges) looking to hold off the challenges of younger brother, Luke (Free Church). It was Luke who made the better start, finally racing clear after the early points were shared and taking the first set by a convincing 11-5 margin. Charlotte then settled the nerves to level at one all, before a crucial third leg also went to Charlotte 23-21. At 2-1 down, Luke did well to keep his composure and showing good movement sent the match into a deciding set. Charlotte made the better start and looked to be pulling clear, before she was pegged back once again. It was anyone's match, but it was Charlotte who finally came through to win -5, 9, 21, -8, 8.

The Ladies Doubles was another five set match that ebbed and flowed. Grace Newman (Rugby) and Holly Thompson were tasked with wresting the title from defending champions, Charlotte Spencer and Llyryn Brocklehurst (Free Church). Grace and Holly made a confident start and some intelligent controlled blocking from Grace and some well timed and placed forehands from Holly gave them the first set 11-8. This spurred Charlotte and Llyryn into life, hitting back to go 2-1 up. The fourth leg looked all set to go their way too, but an inexplicable missed smash off a high return turned things around and Grace and Holly nipped back win 12-10 and move to the deciding leg. Charlotte and Llyryn regrouped and showed determination to keep their title and when a similarly high ball was finally despatched successfully, any remaining doubt was dispelled as they came through -8, 3, 6, -10, 6.

The last match before the half-way break was the Junior Doubles final. Jesse Kendrick-Hill (Rugby) and Luke Spencer faced Laurence Sweeney (St Georges) and Charlotte Spencer. In a highly entertaining match involving four of the league's crop of talented youngsters, it was Laurence and Charlotte who came through to win three straight. All three sets were won at deuce, with Laurence finally delivering the coup de grâce with an audacious backhand return of serve played with unbelievable nonchalance to finish the match 12, 10, 10.

**A**fter a brief break, proceedings resumed with the all St Georges Mixed Doubles final, which pitted Earl Sweeney and Tracey Fletcher against Mark Jackson and Charlotte Spencer. Mark and Charlotte took the first 11-8 and somehow managed

to sneak into a 2-0 lead, coming back to take the second 12-10. Earl and Tracey rallied to extend the match with an 11-7 fourth set win, but were knocked out of their stride with some good play from Mark and Charlotte who wrapped it up 11-5 in the fourth.

The Junior Girls final was a brief affair between Charlotte Spencer and Holly Thompson. Although Holly took her chances well, was positive and hit some outstanding winners, Charlotte was looking sharp, attacked off the return of serve and powered through 4, 2, 4.

The final match of the evening was the Ladies Singles. Defending champion, Charlotte Spencer, had to overcome her Coventry Closed nemesis, Cherry Matthews (Free Church) if she were to retain her crown. Cherry made a fast start in the first set, before Charlotte fought back, but Cherry went clear at the end to win 11-8. Charlotte looked to be getting in to her stride towards the end of the second, which she won 11-9 and left Cherry needing to raise her game. That she would was never in doubt, as the mental strength she is renowned for came to the fore, tightening up on the serve and moving the ball around intelligently to power to an 11-4 win. Charlotte, struggling to keep her frustrations in check, then put in her most impressive set of the entire evening as she recovered from the third set to win the fourth 11-3 with a display of well timed attacking from the backhand wing. As with many of the evening's finals, the last match of the night had gone the distance. Charlotte pulled away at the start, but Cherry showed great resilience to eat into that lead. Alas, for Cherry, she left the fight back a little too late and Charlotte remained patient under pressure to pick her shots well and lift the title -8, 9, -4, 3, 8.

The Committee would like to express its thanks to all the players and supporters who made for an excellent evening's entertainment and, in particular, Ian Stevens for keeping the programme running smoothly and Richard Grover who put in seven consecutive match stint in the umpire's chair.

**L**eamington's representative teams have been in action, and the Men remain firmly in contention for the Midland League title after defeating Leicester 10-0 and Oxford 7-3 to maintain their unbeaten record so far this season. Mark Jackson again showed excellent form to clinch singles hat tricks in both matches, whilst Earl Sweeney and Simon Griew also gained maximums to complete the rout of a Leicester side featuring Andy Lebutt and Dave Grundy. In the Oxford match, Leamington gave a senior debut to Laurence Sweeney who contributed a vital singles win and partnered Jackson to a straight sets doubles success, whilst Earl Sweeney won twice to complete a good away victory for Leamington. This was almost certainly the first time a father and son have represented Leamington's first team together.

Spa's Veterans A side have won three of their five matches to date in Midland League Division 1 after triumphing 6-4 at home to Oxford A, with Earl Sweeney and Mike Bishop each winning two singles to give Spa the edge. Simon Griew added a further singles success and partnered Sweeney to a crucial doubles win.

Previously, Leamington had found the going tough against top side Nottingham A and ended up on the wrong end of an 8-2 score-line, with Griew and Phil Paine both scoring useful singles wins to avoid a potential whitewash.

Spa Veterans B were involved in a competitive match against Telford, but fell just short as they slipped to a 6-4 defeat. In a good spirited match which produced almost four hours of battling table tennis, Malcolm Langford's treble proved key for Telford's win. For Leamington, Dong Wei won twice, Malcolm Macfarlane once and a really competitive doubles win for Dong and Steve Proctor made up the points.

Leamington Juniors recorded a third successive 10-0 victory in the Midland League after thrashing strugglers Gloucester, with Charlotte Spencer, Luke Spencer and Phil Blowey proving far too strong for inexperienced opponents. Upcoming matches against Birmingham, Nuneaton and Rugby will prove sterner tests with Leamington seeking to keep their unbeaten record.

**T**he annual presentation evening is on Friday 21 May (not as stated in the handbook) at Old Leamingtonians RFC, The Crofts, Bericote Road, Leamington Spa CV32 6QP from 7.30pm to 11pm. There will be a hog roast and a quiz. Trophies will be awarded to the winners and runners up in each division and to the winners of the Leamington Closed events.

Cost is £12 or £10 for juniors. Members and their families and friends are all welcome.

Apply to Claire Cram 07920 066873 or Caroline Williams 01926 772067.