



Week commencing 19 April 2010

The Leamington Closed Championships took place this weekend, at Sydenham Sports Centre, with players from the Leamington & District Table Tennis league competing for the right to take their places at Finals Night, next Saturday. The events on show were played up to and including the semi-finals, with the exception of the Men's Singles which was played up to and including the quarter-finals, with all finals taking place at Kenilworth Wardens Cricket Club on 24th April in a single-table setup.

In the Mens Singles, Matthew Carter (Free Church) came through his first round match against number one seed Ian Ferguson and set up a quarter-final clash with team-mate Ron Vose, who had negotiated a potentially tricky group and then ousted Phil Paine (WCC) in the first round. The two team-mates knew each other's games well, but it was Ron who came through and won. Ron will be facing Mark Jackson (St Georges) who reached the semi-final at the expense of Earl Sweeney (St Georges) who he beat in the quarters.

In the bottom half of the draw, Ed Lynn (Colebridge) progressed through his group to reach a quarter-final, where he came up against Ryan Stockham (Free Church) who had dispatched Mike Bishop (St Georges) a round earlier. Ed justified his second seeding by duly claiming the semi-final berth. Defending champion, Jon Hall (Free Church), faced a group where anyone could easily have gone through, but he progressed with a confident display. Mike Browne (Colebridge) was his quarter-final opponent and put up a good fight, but Jon's speed and power was evident as he moved through the semi and will now have his eye firmly on the retention of his title.

In the Ladies Singles, a low entry saw just four competitors playing in two semi-finals. Top seed, Charlotte Spencer (St Georges) saw off the challenge of Holly Thompson (Eathorpe) and will be hoping to retain her title and make it two in a row next week. If she is to do that, however, she will need to get past Cherry Matthews (Free Church) who beat club colleague, Lleryn Brocklehurst, in her semi-final. This sets up an intriguing clash, as Cherry knocked Charlotte out of the Ladies Singles in the Coventry Championships earlier in the year before going on to win it. Charlotte will certainly be out for revenge, but the determination of Cherry to scoop a second Ladies title of the season should not be underestimated.

The Ladies Doubles saw a round-robin group of three playing off, with the top two pairings playing the final next week to decide the title. Defending their title, Charlotte Spencer and Lleryn Brocklehurst topped the group from Grace Newman (Rugby) and Holly Thompson, with Tracey and Olivia Fletcher (St Georges and Free Church) the game, but unlucky pair to miss out.

The Mens Doubles had a number of strong pairings and it was far from certain that the event would go to seeding. In the top half, the first and fourth seeds both made it to the semi-finals and there the fourth seeded pair of Andy Lebutt (Whitnash) and Ian Ferguson

(Colebridge) knocked out Free Church pair Ron Vose and Ryan Stockham. Earl Sweeney and Mike Bishop (St Georges) came through two rounds to reach their semi, where the number three seeds faced second seeded Mike Browne and Jon Hall. In a tight encounter, it was Mike and Earl who flew the flag for Saints and moved forward to the final.

Mark Jackson and Charlotte Spencer will be trying to justify their number one seeding when they play the final of the Mixed Doubles. In their semi-final, they had to take on Ian Ferguson and Holly Thompson, who had turned around their first round match from 0-2 down to claim their semi spot. Although they dropped the first leg, Mark and Charlotte recovered and ran out 3-1 winners. Earl Sweeney and Tracey Fletcher had to get past the tricky pairing of Deepak Chandrababu (Free Church) and Cherry Matthews, but the experience of the long-standing partnership served them well and Earl and Tracey moved in to the final.

Ian Ferguson may have made a shock exit in the Mens Singles, but he was not to be denied a final berth in the Grade 1 Singles, easing through his group before seeing off the challenge of Deepak Chandrababu in the next round. Meanwhile, cadet Laurence Sweeney (St Georges), put out town number three Edward Lynn in the group with an excellent display, which he then carried through to the next round where he dominated non-other than his own father, Earl, and won 3-0! Laurence continued his good form against Ian in the semi, attacking with lots of aggression to try and stop Ian getting the initiative. Ian, though, had the ability to soak up the pressure and hit back with some devastating attacking of his own to take his place in final. Mark Jackson will be facing Ian in a repeat of the 2008 final, as he eased through his half of the draw, knocking out Charlotte Spencer in the semi.

Charlotte fared better in the Grade 2 event, topping her group which earned her a final place. Nerves will surely play a factor in that final as she will be facing younger brother, Luke Spencer (Free Church), who reached the final by beating Steve Proctor (Enigmas) in five pulsating sets.

Ryan Lines (Rugby) showed excellent touch combined with strong attacking shots to cruise through his group and defeat Solomon Hayes (Free Church) in the semi. His Grade 3 final opponent will be John Taylor (Free Church) who beat Niall Herbert (Free Church) in his semi.

The Grade 4 final will be between two club-mates, Niall Herbert and Solomon Hayes in what should be a keenly contested match. Niall had beaten Theo Rutter (Free Church) in his semi-final, with Solomon putting paid to Aaron Riley (Potters Green) in the bottom half of the draw.

Millie Bradshaw (Eathorpe) excelled in the Grade 5 singles, coming through her group before defeating Jeremy Knott (Free Church) in the semi-final. Theo Rutter (Free Church) will be her opponent, as he knocked out club-mate Charlie Snelson in the semi to book a finals night slot at his first championships.

The Youth Singles saw Tristan Gretton (St Georges) reach the final at the expense of Jack Randle (Rugby), giving little clue that he has not long returned from a broken leg, sustained whilst trying to land a triple salchow at Sheffield University's annual figure skating championships. Talented Colebridge junior, Amann Ubhi, will be his opponent, putting out Phil Blowey (Free Church) in the semi-final.

Amann reached the semi-final of the Junior Boys Singles, but he couldn't make the final as he went down to Laurence Sweeney. Laurence's opponent will be Luke Spencer who showed excellent form to beat Jack Randle in the bottom half of the draw. With only two entries, the Junior Girls Singles will be a straight final, to be contested between Charlotte Spencer and Holly Thompson next week.

In the Junior Doubles, Charlotte Spencer and Laurence Sweeney cruised through to the final, where they will play Luke Spencer and Jesse Kendrick-Hill, who had a tougher obstacle to negotiate in Jack Randle and Ryan Lines.

The Under 15 Boys Singles final will be between Luke Spencer and Laurence Sweeney. Luke beat Niall Herbert in the first round, followed by Aaron Riley, and Laurence came through a group of three before dispatching Jesse Kendrick-Hill (Rugby) in the semi.

The Under 15 Girls saw Holly Thompson defeat club-mate Milly Bradshaw to book a place in the final, where she will play Jessica Champion (Free Church), who beat her club-mate Olivia Fletcher to get there.

Jessica will also be involved in the Under 13 Girls final, topping her group of three to qualify ahead of Millie Bradshaw who will play off for the trophy. Olivia Fletcher put up a good fight but finished third in the group. Olivia will be appearing at Finals Night though, in the Under 11 Girls Singles where she will be playing Millie.

Niall Herbert beat Simon Thompson (Eathorpe) in the Under 13 Boys semi-final and he will face Paul Lilley (Rugby) in the final after Paul beat Ben Simpson in his semi.

The Under 11 Boys final will be between Alex Ramsden and Andrew McIlvaney who beat Tom Fletcher and Adam Pullman respectively.

The Veterans Singles was a high quality field, from which the top two seeds emerged as deserved finalists. At the top of the draw, Mike Browne faced Mike Bishop in the semi final, with Browne taking the victory. He will be playing second seed Ron Vose. Ron beat Nilton Green (WCC) in the semi-final – Nilton having qualified from a strong group including Simon Griew (WCC) and Andy Lebutt. The Veteran Ladies Singles will be a straight final, to be contested by Grace Newman (Rugby) and Cherry Matthews.

The Over 50 Singles saw Ron Vose beat Malc Macfarlane (Enigmas) to progress to the final. Peoples champion, Phil Paine, was at his mesmerising best to top a group containing Don Pritchard (Rugby) and Mike Bishop and will hope to take that form into what will be a tough final.

The Over 60 Singles will be a straight final between Malc Macfarlane and Brian Aston (St Georges)

Mark Jackson certainly earned his place in the final of the Handicap Singles final, having to claw back leads against all his opponents, including a 0-55 deficit in his semi-final against Tom Poland (St Georges). Mark will be giving away another big lead against Niall Herbert who advanced to the final by beating Sam Poland in the semi.

In the Parent/Child Doubles, Earl and Laurence Sweeney beat Russell and Charlotte Spencer to reach the final. They will be playing the combative duo of David and Niall Herbert who joined them at the expense of Keith and Jeremy Knott.

A clash with the National Schools Finals, due to an unavoidable late change of date to Finals Night, means that this year a number of finals will not be able to be played next Saturday night as some of the finalists will be competing in Doncaster. As they have qualified for a number of finals, it means it will not be possible to draw up the schedule to accommodate them. Any finals unable to be played on Saturday will be played at the League Headquarters, Radford on Thursday 29th April instead.

The majority of finals, though, will be held as planned at Kenilworth Wardens Cricket Club. Spectators are welcome and actively encouraged to try and create a good atmosphere and a free buffet will be provided at the half-way stage. Please check the website at <http://www.ldtta.co.uk> for details of the timings and match details.