



# Week commencing 26 April 2010

---

**L**eamington League players and supporters gathered on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April for the annual Leamington Championships Finals Night at Kenilworth Wardens.

With the programme being shorter than usual, due to an unforeseen clash with the National Schools Championships, proceedings started a little later than usual with the Grade 5 final. Milly Bradshaw (Eathorpe) made a decent fight of it in the first two sets, before Theo Rutter (Free Church) stepped on the gas in the third to take the title 6, 6, 2.

Hot on the heels of the Grade 5, came the Grade 4 final, which was contested between two club mates – Niall Herbert and Solomon Hayes of Free Church. Solomon took a close first set 11-9, before Niall hit back with a convincing 11-6. In a ding-dong match, Sol recovered to win the third 11-8, before Niall took it to a deciding set with an 11-8 of his own. A fine match was completed when Solomon came through to lift the title 11-7 in the fifth.

Grade 3 put the youth of Ryan Lines (Rugby) against the experience of John Taylor (Free Church). Ryan's control, allied with well timed attacking shots, saw him through two comfortable sets before John settled down in a closer third set. However, it was Ryan who took that set to win the match 4, 5, 10.

**T**he Over 60 final was a contest between two eminent players with League President, Brian Aston (St Georges), taking on League Chairman, Malcolm Macfarlane (Enigmas). This was another match which ebbed and flowed with Brian taking the early advantage, before Malcolm hit back to go 2-1 up. Brian levelled things, before Malcolm upped his game in the deciding set to win -9, 8, 11, -8, 6.

The Parent/Child doubles was contested in friendly spirits, although the result was never in doubt with Earl and Laurence Sweeney (St Georges) firm favourites. This was well justified as they raced through the first two sets before David and Niall Herbert (Free Church) fought back with some excellent attacking play and grabbed a well earned third set. This refocused the Sweeney duo, who promptly wrapped up the title 3, 1, -10, 3.

The Under 11 Boys was won by Alex Ramsden (Rugby), who beat Andrew McIlvaney (Free Church). In a match where the forehand drive was dominant, it was Alex who found more consistency to run out the winner -9, 10, 5, 9.

The Handicap Singles can often produce a very short or a very long match. With Mark Jackson (St Georges) facing a 49 point deficit against Niall Herbert, the odds were on a long one. As expected, Mark took flurries of points, but to his credit Niall did not let this affect him and stuck to his attacking game plan throughout and was a well deserved winner 61-45.

**N**iall was less fortunate in his Under 13 Boys match – he made a great start to take the first two sets 6 and 8, but was then pegged back by Paul Lilley (Rugby) who took the next two 5 and 6. In to the fifth and deciding set and, with the momentum with him, Paul took a commanding 8-4 lead. Niall dug deep and fought back to draw level at 8-8, before Paul regained his composure and won a competitive match 11-8.

Jessica Champion (Free Church) succeeded in claiming the Under 13 Girls crown, with a straight sets win over Milly Bradshaw. Milly's forehand was always dangerous, but Jessica was able to match it in a close first before winning the second more comfortably. Milly responded well in the fifth and was unlucky not to extend the final further, finally succumbing as Jessica won 8, 5, 9.

Better news for Milly in the Under 11 Girls, though. As has been the norm, the first two sets against Olivia Fletcher (Free Church) were close affairs, with Milly winning them both 13-11. The third set was a more comfortable 11-5.

**W**ith the Men's semi-finals due next on the schedule, it was unfortunate that Ron Vose (Free Church) was forced to withdraw due to illness and as such Mark Jackson (St Georges) received a bye to the final. Ron was also due to compete in the Veteran Men's and the Over 50 finals, which gave Mike Browne (Colebridge) and people's champion, Phil Paine (WCC), walkover victories.

Men's semi number two, though, was able to go ahead and was between Edward Lynn (Colebridge) and defending champion, Jon Hall (Free Church). The first two sets were certainly not as anticipated, with first Jon and then Edward on the receiving end of an onslaught they could do nothing about. Ed won the first set 11-2; Jon the second 11-1! Set three was a closer one, with Jon's serve setting him up to play some crunching forehands which saw him home 11-6. Edward, no stranger to crunching forehands himself, hit back in the fourth and nicked it 12-10. The fifth promised to be a nail-biter, but Jon looked exceptionally sharp and booked his place in the final with an 11-5 deciding set victory.

**T**he Cadet Boys final was between Laurence Sweeney (St Georges) and Luke Spencer (Free Church). Laurence has made excellent progress throughout this season and showed excellent touch and power to win three straight – 4, 9, 5.

The two youngsters faced off again, a couple of matches later, in the Junior Boys final. Luke seemed a little more relaxed and this time it was a closer affair. Laurence dropped the third set, but always looked to have the edge and was in control of the match which he won 8, 7, -8, 8.

**T**he Grade 1 Singles was between Ian Ferguson (Colebridge) and Mark Jackson. Mark made an excellent start, with some positive play driving Ian back and allowing Mark to make his forehand count to win 11-8. Ian retaliated and levelled 11-8, before Mark went back on the offensive to win a tight third set 12-10. Mark had

his chances in a fourth set that went to Ian 11-8 and had them again in the fifth. However, Ian was quick to seize on any loose ball and when chances came his way he took them with ruthless efficiency to lift the Grade 1 trophy -8, 8, -10, 8, 7.

Ian was back in action in the Men's Doubles, partnering Andy Lebutt (Whitnash). The right/left handed combination faced the St Georges pair of Earl Sweeney and Mike Bishop. The Saints pair started the better, winning the first leg 11-8, before Ian and Andy started to find some exquisite angles to come through and take the next three 6, 7, 7.

Rising Colebridge star, Amann Ubhi, showed that he is one to watch next season with a devastating Youth Singles win over Tristan Gretton (St Georges). Tristan looked a shadow of the player we've come to expect in the first set, getting trounced 11-1, before making a better fight of it in the next two. In truth, Amann was always on top and his relentless forehand propelled him to a 1, 7, 7 victory.

**W**ith all other matches completed, the Men's Singles final was ready to take place. In a match that promised much, a supreme display of consistent, hard attacking play from Jon Hall left Mark Jackson reeling. Jon started the match with an un-returnable serve, followed by one that induced a weak return that was duly punished. That set the tone for the match with Jon completely dominant in his 4, 5, 1 victory which saw him retain his title and pick up his second Men's Singles trophy.

The Committee would like to express their thanks to all those who donated prizes for the raffle, all those who helped with the running of the tournament last weekend and the Finals Night and, especially, the umpires who gave their services on Finals Night.

**P**resentation Evening will be held, this year, on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May at Old Leamingtonian Rugby Club, Bericote Road, Leamington Spa. The evening will include a quiz, music and a hog roast and will start at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £12 for adults and £10 for juniors and are available through Claire Cram, Malcolm Macfarlane or Estyn Williams (contact details available on <http://www.ldtta.co.uk/2009/Contacts.htm> ).

Finally, a reminder that the remaining finals are to be played at League HQ, Lewis Rd, Radford Semele this Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> April, from 7.00pm.