

Echo Table Tennis Round-up

The Fawley Construction Liverpool Closed championships lived up to expectations, with the top four seeds reaching their allotted semi-final positions, the quartet having safely negotiated their respective group matches. The eagerly awaited showdown between Kevin Dolder and Keith Williams was set up when Keith saw off doubles partner and Bootle YMCA team mate, Wayne Percival.

Wayne took the opening game but dropped the next two before edging home 12-10 in the fourth. That, though, was effectively the end of his challenge, Keith losing only two points in the decider.

In the top half of the draw, Kevin accounted for the promising Crosby High youngster and Southport closed champion Tom Bray, 7, 9, 1, and followed up with a 3-1 win over Ireland international (Wav. Lab's) David Hayes. Fourth seed Ken Jackson (Bath Street Marine) was then eased out for the loss of one game in the semi finals which left him facing nine times champion Williams in the final.

Keith stands at 4 in the England veterans list while Kevin, who has just risen to 16 in the England senior rankings, has the verdict over the YM' man on both occasions in the league this season. The Ford man has lifted the trophy eight times and is one of the best six champions in the past thirty years, took the big decision to use pimped rubber on his backhand side hoping it would give him the edge over his old foe, who first lifted the crown in 1977. Keith took the opening game 11-7, Kevin though winning the next two to lead 2-1. At 9-6 down in the fourth and Kevin looking to regain the crown, Keith collected the next four points but then had to save two match points before forcing a fifth game decider by winning 15-13.

The high standard of tactical play continued with Kevin varying the pace, spin and speed of the rallies, and although KW had coped well with KD's new style of play, he found himself 4-1 down in the final game. KW, who beat Kev 11-8 in the fifth in the 2004 final, and lost 12-10 in the decider to the Ford man a year later, hit back to level at 6-6. He then piled on the pressure, forcing Kev into a number wayward shots and dropped only one more point in a tremendous encounter to win 11-7 and claim the title for a tenth time in his seventeenth final appearance, equalling the record of his former Rafter's team mate and England international, Ronnie Rumjahn.

A year ago, the men's crown went to Poland's Michael Rogala the first time the trophy had been won by an Eastern European. The 2008 ladies' singles crown also went to a Polish player, Sylwia Rozek but not until she overcame a scare in the last match in the Round Robin section when she faced Stephanie Howard. Sylwia, the victor over holder Cherith Graham together with the 2006 and four times champion Alice Howard, stood level at 8-8 in the fifth game decider with Steph Howard, but pulled through to win 11-8 and take the title at the first attempt. Cherith having beaten Alice and Steph mother and daughter pair, was the runner up.

Keith enjoyed a comfortable passage to last four of the veterans singles event, where he faced former champion Ken Jackson, but qualified 3-0 to meet triple champion Dave Roberts who had dismissed Wayne Percival. Again, Keith was in fine form, retaining the title in straight games to cap a fine tournament.

Men's singles: semi-finals:

K Dolder bt K Jackson 7, 5, -5, 7;

K Williams bt W Percival -5, 6, 2, -10, 2;

Final:

Williams bt Dolder 7, -8, -7, 13, 7.

Ladies singles Round Robin

Champion Sylwia Rozek (Poland)

S Rozek bt C Graham 7, 3, 11 bt A Howard 5, 6, -11, 4; bt S Howard 6, -13, 10, -7, 8

Runner up C Graham

Graham bt S Howard 1, 8, 8 and bt A Howard 4, 6, -9, 4

Don Davies

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