

## **Echo Table Tennis Round-up**

The 80th anniversary City of Liverpool Tees Sport Grand Prix, originally known as the Merseyside Open when first staged in 1929, again enjoyed a large enthusiastic entry, thereby maintaining it's reputation as an ideal pre-season tournament.

There were few shocks in the two main events, the respective top seeds in the men's singles both duly qualified for the final although in the women's event, neither of the top two seeds managed to do likewise.

The last eight in the men's singles contained four players from north of the border one of course, being Gavin Rungay, the holder for the past three years. He sailed through to the last eight via straight games wins over Mark Simon (Wales) and Julien Gittens (Y) before dropping the opening game 11-8 to Ireland's Paul McCreery in the quarters. Two quick 3 and 3 wins saw him back on track but, the man from the Emerald Isle hit back to force a decider which Rungay took, 11-6. His semi-final foe 7th seed Mark Simpson, won 3-1 to oust 3rd seed Stewart Crawford (Sco) a losing semi-finalist to Rungay in 2008. Simpson's fine run, though, was ended by the holder in straight games.

Darius Knight enjoyed a similar route to the penultimate stage, dropping just one game to Ireland's Gerry Campbell in the last 32. He stepped up a gear after that, conceding a total of just eleven points in the proceeding three games. Sean Doherty (Sco) was his next victim followed by Scott Barton (Sco) setting up a clash with Damien Nicholls, the victor over New Zealand's Craig Dye and London based Scot Euan Liddle. Nicholls, though, had little trouble with the chopper, qualifying for the last four in straight games before suffering a 3-0 reversal to the England man. Nicholls put on a brave show but couldn't unhinge Knight who, a year ago lost in the last eight to the unseeded German finalist, Raphael Graf.

The final, as so many over the years in Liverpool, was a sparkling affair which kept the crowd around the table of more than two hundred, on their toes. The England number 2 kicked off in fine style taking the opening game, 11-7 the holder, though, recovering well to forge a 2-1 lead with some tremendous and varied counter attacking play. Rungay, the first man to win the Liverpool title three years in a row, had to contend with Knight's excellently disguised spin serves which ultimately, was the key to his success. He was made to sweat in the fourth but, weathered a spell of fine play by the England man and after failing to win his first match point at 10-9, the modest, likeable Scot took the title on his fourth, to squeeze home 15-13. The encounter was thoroughly enjoyed by all and was a credit, not only to the players but, was also a great advert for the sport. The men's singles title has now crossed the border north for the past five years - Rungay's latest success moving him level on four men's titles with Johnny Leach and Denis Neale while Victor Barna has five to his credit.

The women's event contained five of the top ten in England Karina LeFevre (Cv) a losing semi-finalist to the eventual champion Liu Na a year ago. She was seeded at one this year but, fell at the penultimate stage, again, to the eventual champion Egle Adomelyte, 11-3 in the decider. Second seed, Amanda Mogey (Ireland) fared even worse departing in the quarter's going down to Lancashire's Lindsey Reynolds who then dismissed Klaudia Szatkowska (Midd) 3-1. Mrs Reynolds, ranked at seven in England had won her three previous rounds 3-1 and took the opening game 12-10 against Egle in the final, before being comfortably beaten in the next, 11-5. The

England number 4 made it 2-1 and edged home in the fourth 11-9 to claim the title for the first time.

### **Men's Singles**

**Semi Final** G Rungay bt M Simpson 3, 8, 11; D Knight bt D Nicholls 7, 9, 8;

**Final:** Rungay bt Knight -7, 8, 8, 13;

### **Women's Singles**

**Semi Final** E Adomelyte bt Karina LeFevre 3, -4, 9, -8, 3;

L Reynolds bt K Szadkowska 10, 7, -7, 10;

**Final:** Adomelyte bt Reynolds -10, 5, 8, 9;

Don Davies  
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