

Echo Table Tennis Round-up

Men's Band 1

England ranked 24 Kevin Dolder, the runner-up to Craig Hardie (Scot) in the group matches, was then pitted against top seed Paul McCreery in round one of the knock out stages. The Liverpool man twice took the lead, the Irishman pegging him back on each occasion before Dolder edged home 9 in the decider. A three straight win over Matt Pernet (Sy) and a 3-1 defeat of Richard Andrews (BK) followed which saw him into the the final. The Scot had a close shave in last 16 scraping home 10 in the fifth against the in-form Tomasz Rzeszotko (Wales) who already had the Band 2 singles title tucked under his belt. After beating Joe Chacholides (Harold House) Hardie slipped behind 2-0 against Patrick Thomas (Wales) in the semi's but, after stepping up a gear, dropped just 17 points in the next three games which gave him another crack at Dolder.

The clash followed the pattern of Dolder's match with McCreery - the nine times Liverpool champion winning the first and third, Hardie replying in the even games. In a tense finale, it was the Yorkshire born Dolder who came out on top 11-9 in the decider, a sweet victory after having lost 12-10 in the fifth to the Scot in the initial group stage.

Band Two: Former Liverpool League player, Tomasz Rzeszotko, was the runner-up to Brian Wright (Sco) in his group before beating Ramata Sherwin (Philippines) in a preliminary round match to enter the main knock out rounds. Two more comfortable wins landed him with a semi-final clash with second seed Dash Zhang where, after winning the first game, lost the next two and stood on the brink of defeat at 10 all. But, he snatched the the next two points and eased home 11-5 in the fifth. His final opponent, Kevin Caldon (Essex) ran him close in the first before the Polish man negotiated the next two for the title.

Band Three: Joseph Hurdley (Sp) played twenty games after qualifying for the main draw and had to recover from 2-1 down in the semi's against Scotland's Willie Mabon before taking the last two, 10 and 12. His final opponent, fifth seed Remata Sherwin (Phil), enjoyed an easier passage and was behind only once en-route when losing the first to Edward Fambley (Y) in the last 16. Hurdley, standing at 349 in the country, disposed of Sherwin in the final and after taking the opening game, squeezed home in the next two 13 and 11 for the title.

Band Four: The final was an all Ireland affair, unseeded Sam Logue taking on Maciek Szymanski. The latter dropped just two games en-route and neither time did he trail. Logue won in five from 2-1 adrift against Thomas Dantzig (Mi) in the last eight and was a game down to Fambley (Y) in the next – before bagging the next three to reach the final. Szymanski ousted Scotland's Nathan Courtney in the semi' but was unable to overcome his team mate who took the title in straight games.

Band Five: Szymanski (Irl) had twice to recover from a 2-0 deficit, playing a total of twenty one games to claim the title. Group winner Adam Fox (Cu) opened up a healthy lead in the quarter's and lost only 13-11 in the fourth and the decider to the Ireland man 11-7. Steven Fowler (Sco) took the opener against Szymanski in the last four but couldn't clinch the two points when level at 13 all in the next, eventually falling away in the next two 8 and 4.

Michael Lunn (La) also had to fight hard from deficits' firstly against second seed Ernest Mpundu (Ys) from 2-1 down and after Michael Hahn had forged a 2-0 lead, Lunn pipped him 13-11 in the fifth. Mathew Lancey (Wal) was his next victim who took the first but was then beaten 3-1 in the penultimate round. Yet again, Szymanski made hard work of clinching victory - Lunn ranked at 533 in

England, looked in fine form when racing into a 2-0 lead, the Band Four runner-up, though, wasn't done for and swept to victory, 8, 9, and 9.

Band Six: Top seed Lee Devenport (La) won his group but was dismissed in the first round of the knockout stage, by Scotsman Dean Cundy who had beaten Matt McCormick 3-1 in the preliminary round. He also lost the first two game in the quarter's to Jonathan Evans (Ha) and the first 14-12 and third in the semi's to Andrew Eagles (Ch) but earned a place in the final against Kristof Pinter (La), winning 8 and 4.

The final required all five games, Cundy romping home in the first 11-4 and despite losing the next two, levelled matters in the fourth. Pinter, who had beaten Everton Wilson Jnr. (Ng) and Matthew Knott plus former Lancashire junior Richard Beattie and Matthew Knott to reach the final, picked up his first rating points, clinching a fine victory 11-6 in the fifth.

Under 21 Singles: England number 2 and top seed Darius Knight conceded a walk over at the first round stage which left Damien Nicholls as the favourite. He duly qualified accounting for Mark Simpson (Du) 3-1 in the last four. Ireland's Ashley Robinson, the beneficiary of Knight's withdrawal, pushed Craig Hardie (Sco) (the runner-up in the Band One final) all the way, losing 11-8 in the fifth. Sean Doherty, also from Scotland, put a halt to Hardie's charge 3-1 in the last four before Nicholls took the title by three games to one.

Women's Band One The final produced a fine contest between Natalie Slater (St) and Mary Fuller, the former accounting for top seed Melissa Wright (Ys) in straight games and Gillian Edwards (Sco) 3-1. Miss Fuller from Yorkshire, coached by legendary Estonian, Hans Soova, chalked up 3-1 wins over Chloe Thomas (Wal) and Lancashire's Rachel Baker 11-7 in the fifth. Miss Slater edged the opener 13-11, dropped the next but took the fourth 11-9 before charging to the title 11-3 in the decider.

Women's Band 2: The Celtic nations were well represented in the main draw with Scotland's Gillian Edwards being joined by second seed Sara Dolan (Ireland) together with Chloe Thomas, Angharad and Megan Phillips all from the principality. The final paired Miss Edwards, who recovered from 2-0 down and eleven all in the third against Megan Phillips, with Angharad who had dismissed team mate Chloe in the semi's. Miss Edwards eased to a 3-0 victory to annexe the title.

Mixed Veteran Singles: With most of the top veteran players in England failing to enter the tournament, Lee Neil (Ng) ranked at two in England was seeded at one with Wales' Mark Simon at two. The next highest English ranked player was Kevin Caldon, standing at 44. Ivan Lewis (Y) 109 in England, dashed Neil's hopes of claiming the title when they met in the last four, winning 3-11, 11-3, 11-4, 11-8.

In the other half of the draw Tony Wilson (Cv) beat Mark Simon 3-1 in the quarter's and local player Garry Watson (Ch) who beat Darius Knight in the men's event two years ago. As in an earlier final, the runner-up held a healthy lead, this time it was Lewis who recovered from 2-0 down to take the title won by Liverpool's Keith Williams, a year ago.

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