

Suffolk Junior Table Tennis Championships 2015/2016

Sunday 22nd November 2015 saw this season's County Championships held at Stowupland Sports Centre. We had a very strong entry of 36 participants competing for Under 11, 13, 15, 18 honours as well as participating in a couple of all inclusive events; Handicap Singles and Pot Luck Doubles.

The latter 2 events gave the less experienced players the opportunity of beating their higher rated opponents in the Handicap, and to play with the more experienced players in the doubles.

In the Handicap Singles all players were given a rating according to ability and played 1 single game up to 31, and despite valiant performances by Harry Gill (18) and Josh Barnard (9), *unfortunately* the 2 best players on the day contested the final. The latter saw James Davies-Stokes (-2) play superbly to defeat Kian Burgess (-5) by 31-28 and end Kian's hopes of a threepeat handicap victory.

The Pot Luck doubles was typically close and impossible to call, with over half of the total matches in the event going to a deciding 5th set. However, the in-form pairing of likely lads – Luke Davies-Stokes and Lewis Roberts were too strong for the field and defeated Dan Shelley and Lucy Needham in the final. A word here for Lucy who, despite only playing for 6 months, carried her more experienced partner through the early rounds. A similar mention also is given to Matthew Birch, who played with great spirit, skill and enthusiasm and would surely have progressed further had his vastly experienced partner (Kian Burgess) been able to serve *on* the table at a vital stage.

The age-categorised events, allowed players to compete against their peers, to crown the top players in Suffolk.

The U11 boys was won by the unseeded Lewis Roberts in spectacular fashion without losing an individual leg. He defeated McKenzie Lowe in the final, who had himself battled through a tight semi-final, defeating Henry Shaw in 5 legs.

McKenzie had another tough semi-final in the U13 boys, this time against the number 1 seed - Luke Davies-Stokes. The latter was rather fortunate to come through this one winning 3-1, though all 3 winning legs were deuce games, which could have gone either way. In the final, he demonstrated his class with a clinical 3 leg victory over Albert Roberts.

The U13 girls had 3 entrants playing in a round robin format. Lucy Needham acquitted herself well but the key match in the end went to Lucy Curtis, who came back from the brink of defeat at 2-1 down to defeat Isobel McGerty in the fifth.

All four seeds progressed unscathed into the U15 boys semi-finals, though Luke Davies-Stokes was pushed all the way by a rejuvenated Thomas Clarke. James Davies-Stokes show-boated his way to a straightforward defeat of younger brother Luke and Kian Burgess dispatched Josh Barnard without breaking a sweat. The final, though very close early on, saw Kian victorious in 3 straight legs.

Another round robin in the U15 girls led to Riya Kumar holding on to the title she won last year without losing a leg. Lucy Curtis confirmed her superiority over Isobel McGerty finishing in the runner-up position.

The U18 girls event had 5 very strong competitors, playing in a round robin group. Holly McGerty came out on top, winning all matches and only dropping 1 leg along the way. Katharine Shaw was the runner-up, narrowly defeating last years winner, Natalie Wills who in turn won a very close match against Hannah Page by 11-8 in the fifth to claim 3rd place.

The last event of the day put the flagging energy levels of the U18 boys to the test. Jack Samson warrants a word for a battling victory in the decider over Josh Barnard in his quarter final before giving Kian Burgess a scare in the semi-final finally going down in 4 legs. The other semi was a jittery affair with James Davies-Stokes scrapping to a 3-1 victory over Dan Shelley. The final had Kian and James play out their third final contest of the day, which Kian saw out most comfortably, by 3 straight legs.

A final mention for the superb umpiring skills displayed by Bob Watts throughout the day and for the tireless help of trainee umpire Aron Jordan.

Summary of finals results

U11 Boys -	Lewis Roberts defeated McKenzie Lowe 11-4, 11-9, 11-9
U13 Girls -	Lucy Curtis victorious, Isabel McGerty runner-up
U13 Boys -	Luke Davies-Stokes defeated Albert Roberts 11-8, 11-3, 11-5
U15 Girls -	Riya Kumar victorious, Lucy Curtis runner-up 11-9, 12-14, 11-5, 11-8
U15 Boys -	Kian Burgess defeated James Davies-Stokes 13-11, 15-13, 11-2
U18 Girls -	Holly McGerty victorious, Katharine Shaw runner-up
U18 Boys -	Kian Burgess defeated James Davies-Stokes 11-8, 11-5, 11-5
Handicap singles –	James Davies-Stokes (-2) defeated Kian Burgess (-5) 31-28
Pot Luck Doubles –	Luke D-S/Lewis Roberts defeated Dan Shelley/Lucy Needham 11-6, 11-3, 11-8