

KNIGHTON PARK TTC CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

Spectators were treated to an excellent evening of table tennis after not being able to hold these championships since 2019, including a most amazing fight back in the premier final for the eventual champion to turn the tables in a most impressive aggressive performance to take the title.

In the **OPEN SINGLES** semi finals James Berry gave notice of his current form after losing the first game to Oscar Bentley by taking the next three 11-7, 11-4, 11-7. An absorbing semi had already taken place when Reza Kiani kept fighting back from a game down against Karen Smith before Karen maintained control of the fifth game to reach the final.

The final was a classic. Karen won the first but James went to town to level the match with an 11-3 score, and then squeezed home in an exciting third game 13-11. Karen, of course, maintained her composure and showed all her experience in battling out an 11-9 success to level the scores again.

Then came the fifth and final game and Karen was in control, turning round at 5-1 and then building to a 9-2 lead with everyone in the building knowing, they thought, what the inevitable outcome would be. Except for one – Karen's opponent. James did not falter for one moment and produced some astonishing shots, crashing low skimming hits both backhand and forehand criss-crossing the table.

Point by point he fought back reaching 10-10 by refusing to give up. Each player had their chances as deuce was reached six times, first one then the other, led. Finally James produced two winning shots in a row at 15-15 to take a final that possibly deserved to be the proverbial draw. But how could you take that away from such overpowering self belief? With Karen, as ever, gracious in defeat.

Semi Finals: Karen Smith beat Reza Kiani 11-4, 9-11, 11-8, 7-11, 11-6.
James Berry beat Oscar Bentley 9-11, 11-7, 11-4, 11-7.

Final: James Berry beat Karen Smith 7-11, 11-3, 13-11, 9-11, 17-15.

First up on the night was the **BOY SINGLES** final with Oscar Bentley from Div One and Virgil Birch-Abban who did well in Div Two. Virgil looked very good in the first and won at 11-8 with some excellent shots. However, Oscar's experience at a higher level began to kick in despite his opponent sticking to his game, and he won the next three to take this coveted title.

Oscar Bentley beat Virgil Birch Abban 8-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-6.

The **VETERANS SINGLES** final was also played before the interval with Reza once more on the table, this time against the up and coming Neal Smith who found the going a little tough, but not surprising with Reza so much experience at the top. If Neal continues to improve as he has done since joining he will be up there in the top division mixing it with Reza in no time at all.

Reza Kiani beat Neal Smith 11-6, 11-4, 11-3.

Tradition has it that the two handicap events start proceedings in the second half and it was good to see Club President, Glenys Odams, watching and she was able to present the trophy she donated for the **HANDICAP DOUBLES**.

For this the two pairs started level playing the old method of scoring up to 21, best of three games. Dave Mountain and Chris Parmer-Saville are team-mates in the league

and know each others games inside out. That showed against John Underwood and Robert Geary who never quite got going. Dave in particular played some outstanding hits to win a good many of the points. For some unaccountable reason there was much inspection of bats before the match! Can't be the rubber, surely.

Dave Mountain/Chris Parmar-Saville beat John Underwood/Robert Geary 21-11, 21-13.

Finally before the finale came the **HANDICAP SINGLES** featuring Chris Parmar-Saville once again and who is making this his own having won it last time it was played for. He was up against Neal Smith who received two points and made almost full use of them in an intriguing battle in which Chris showed why he was a formidable handicap player while Neal couldn't quite secure the second game which might have turned the tables.

Chris Parmar-Saville beat Neal Smith (+2) 21-14, 22-20.

Then we came to the Open Singles Final.

Many thanks for all those who helped, in particular Shirley for volunteering to do the catering to give welcome cups of tea and coffee etc.

John Bowness.