

Week Commencing 24th March 2003

The quarter-finals of the Coronation Cup individually handicapped and the Southwell Trophy team handicapped competitions took place recently. In the Coronation Cup particularly it was the teams from the higher divisions who seemed to have the luck - or the experience - to beat the handicaps and win through, reaching 61 before their opponents. First the combined squad from AP of teams A and B from divs 1 and 2 whitewashed second division Marconi A 5-0 in the Coronation Cup. Andrew Meredith and Gerald Taylor picked up braces and Stephanie Hawkins added a single.

Then a steady performance by second division Eathorpe A to overcome the handicaps given to the combined Free Church teams H and J from division B gave Thorpe 5-2 victory. Matthew Cooper excelled for Eathorpe, taking his three, Chris Atkins and Colin Cooper adding one each. Impressive young Adam Cooper held onto two for Church's reply. In an exciting match Hugh Matthews for Free Church A proved too strong for all three players from Eathorpe C / D. This treble plus one each from Dave Daniels and John Taylor gave the second div Church side the 5-3 success. Eric Smith, Jim French and Matthew Jackson all kept one each for the 2-aside league Eathorpe squad. This was excellent work particularly from reserve Matthew Jackson, who was gaining his first experience of this competition.

In the team handicapped Southwell Trophy event, played up to 41 points, top team County Council A paired with their C side to take on Free Church A, with only 1 point on the handicaps to give to the Church trio. This proved too little to give away with Clive Irwin comfortably taking his three for Council and Phil Paine two. Clive Irwin then partnered Tony Ford to win the doubles 41/40 and the match 6-3. Dave Daniels, John Taylor and Les Booth all held onto one single for Church. Free Church H / J had a close match with AP Sports A / B who play in divs 1 and 2 before edging the result 6-5 in a match where 5 games finished 41/40 or 41/39. Church from Div B on +28 were led by Adam Cooper who took his three and Ben McNally who picked up two. In the final game Adam Cooper partnered Chris Blowey to the doubles victory and the match. Andrew Meredith took two for AP, Eddy Stafford and Gerald Taylor one each and Andrew and Gerald won the first doubles. Free Church I / K won through 6-2 against Eathorpe C / D. Another set of almost evenly matched teams, who all play in the 2-aside league, Church had the advantage of just 1 point. Luke Hobbins and Sam Smith held onto two each, Joseph Cox a crucial single and Luke and Joseph took the doubles. Eric Smith held onto two for Eathorpe's reply.

The February Lillington Free Church tournament saw Zhao Shaung from Banbury picking up the top trophies. Zhao Shaung currently plays for Blessed George Napier in Leamington League Division 1, where she is currently unbeaten. She took both the Seniors and the Grade A. Her final opponent in the Seniors was Matthew Squires from West Bromwich, whilst Kou Lei was the runner-up in the Grade A competition.

Tournament organiser Hugh Matthews (Free Church) won the Seniors consolation against Earl Sweeney who plays for St. Georges in Leamington, in what must have been a top quality match for the consolation. Tom Brocklehurst took the Grade A consolation for Free Church against Leigh Hipkins from Kidderminster. Sam Harrison (Oxford) picked up the Under 17 title against Sasha Grokhotov from Redditch, whilst Rhys Martindale (Banbury) was successful in the consolation final against Scott Hewitt (Birmingham).

The Under 14 event was won by Chris Baldwin (Kidderminster), who overcame Paul Leck (Birmingham) in the final. Consolation honours went to Alistair Tallis with Neil Jethwa (Banbury) the losing finalist. Alan Caffrey (Birmingham) gained the Under 12 championship, with young Christian

Miller (Leamington) unable to halt Alan. The consolation went to Scott Jamieson who played against Minesh Morjaria in their final.

The Grade B event in the afternoon gave Sasha Grokhotov a second and better cup to take back to Redditch. He overcame Janice Rowan (Coventry) in the final. Chris Baldwin added the consolation trophy by beating Joe Davies. In the Grade C Paul Leck overcame fellow Brummie Chris Lambert in the main event final, whilst Daniel Rowan (Coventry) squashed Scott Hewitt (Birmingham) for the consolation title. S Jamieson had the luck to pick up the Improvers trophy by scoring over John McKeever. The consolation saw Grant Nicholls gaining success over local player Ryan Fenwick. The Beginners competition was won by new names with P Norton the winner and Adam Cardell the runner-up. Minesh Morjaria gained the consolation over Tom Crellin (Free Church).

The next Free Church Tournament takes place on Saturday 5 April at Sydenham Sports Centre, Leamington Spa. Contact Hugh Matthews for entries.

Leamington are still in one of the national team competitions. Last month the Spa Veteran Men made it through the first round of the Alec Brook Trophy, when Phil Paine, Ron Vose and Graham Hoskin travelled to Trowbridge in Wiltshire. Leamington should have played in a group of 4 but Ilfracombe were forced to withdraw at the last minute because of a bereavement. Swindon was the strongest team and won the group as they beat Leamington 5-2 and West Wiltshire 5-4. West Wiltshire last year made it to the finals and with a very strong number 1 (ranked 50 in the country) fancied their chances. However luck favoured Spa who succeeded in their encounter against West Wiltshire also by the narrow margin of 5-4 and so progress from the group as runner-up.

Phil Paine won one in each of the matches, though he lost a further two on deuce in the fifth against West Wiltshire. Ron Vose and Graham Hoskin took braces to secure the win over WW and Ron Vose also picked up one win against Swindon. Leamington are now in the last 16 of this competition and are drawn to take part in another group play-off in April at a home venue against Didcot, Liverpool and Hallam. These 3 teams are all strong sides and with only one team to progress to the national finals, Spa's chances are probably slim.

The Warwickshire Veteran A squad of Ron Vose (AP), Phil Paine (County Council) and two Birmingham players have been competing to good effect in Division 2A of the County Championships. The team finished second in this strong division which contained a number of tough teams but unfortunately only the top team wins promotion. Ironically Warwickshire had beaten the top side but had lost two matches 5-4 on the doubles to the two Essex teams which finished below Warwickshire.