

Week Commencing 10th March 2008

The Leamington Closed Championships were held this weekend, with players from the League competing to earn the right to play on Finals Night, to be held on Saturday 15th March.

In the Men's Singles, the event was played up to the semi-final stages – the four semi-finalists will play on Finals Night to decide which two play for the Men's title. Number one seed, Ian Ferguson, progressed through with little trouble, overcoming a first set loss against Gary Webb in the quarter final to win -10, 4, 3, 2. Ian will face hard-hitting penholder Ron Vose, who defeated Earl Sweeney 12, 7, 6 in his quarter. The withdrawal of the number two seed the day before led to a re-shuffle of the seeding and Mark Jackson, who stepped up to the second seed position took his place in the last four at the expense of Simon Griew 5, 8, 8. The semi-final line up is completed by Ian Randle as he took his place by beating Andy Davies -7, 7, 10, 7.

The Ladies Singles' semi finals were both decided in straight sets. Top-seeded Samantha Meredith eased through at the expense of Sue Clarke, whilst in the other semi, cadet Charlotte Spencer knocked out defending champion, Tracey Fletcher.

The Men's Doubles went according to the seeding plan as Mark Jackson and Earl Sweeney sailed through the top half of the draw, and Ian Ferguson and Sasha Grokhotov the bottom. Jackson and Sweeney beat Mike Bridgman and Ron Vose 7, 7, 9 in their semi final and Ferguson and Grokhotov made light work of the explosive Damon Fenton and Matt Jordan, beating them 2, 5, 3.

The withdrawal of one of the Mixed Doubles pairs left top-seeded Samantha Meredith and Navinder Matharu with a bye straight to the final. There they will face Charlotte Spencer and Mark Jackson, who played well to put out second seeds Tracey Fletcher and Earl Sweeney in five sets.

The Bombay Tandoori Grade 1 Singles will be contested by two of the Men's semi-finalists. Mark Jackson battled through a tense quarter final against Jason Adams before beating Earl Sweeney 4, 5, -8, 10 in the semi. Mark will be up against Ian Ferguson who moved through the bottom half of the draw, beating Tristan Gretton 8, 4, 9 in the semi.

Steve Proctor put out team-mate Malcolm Macfarlane 9, -3, 9, 9 in the semi final of Grade 2, to claim his first appearance on Finals Night. He will be up against the youthful talent of Jack Randle who beat Samantha Meredith in a tight five-setter in his semi-final.

Grade 3 will be a battle between two of Leamington's representative Junior side. Laurence Sweeney got the better of the defensive guile of Lincoln Liburd and he will face Phil Blowey, whose extra power proved decisive against the consistency of Jesse Kendrick-Hill.

Ryan Lines put out Richard Pittaway in the semis of the Grade 4 Singles in four tight sets, eventually prevailing -6, 10, 6, 7. He will face Holly Thompson, who put out fellow Free Church player Niall Herbert. Holly dropped the first set, but recovered to win -4, 8, 2, 3.

Niall's disappointment was short lived, as he beat Jordan Cullaine-Liburd in four sets 9, 6, -7, 5 to reach the Grade 5 final. His opponent will be Jeremy Knott, who beat Jess Champion and Simon Thompson to progress from his group and through to the final.

In the Youth Singles, Sasha Grokhotov was too strong for group-opponents Luke Hobbins and Jack Randle and advanced to the final. He will be facing Tristan Gretton who emerged from his group unscathed before putting out Navinder Matharu in the semi-final.

Tristan will also be making an appearance in the Junior Boys final, having beaten Luke Hobbins in five sets – eventually coming through -3, 7, 11, -9, 7. Tristan will be facing Ben Meakin who played superbly to put out second seed, Jack Randle, in five sets -8, 10, -7, 9, 11.

Jack will have a chance to set the record straight in the Under 15 Boys as he reached the final by beating Jesse Kendrick Hill 2, -4, 4, 5. Ben Meakin put in another outstanding performance to beat second seed Matthew Outhwaite in the group stages and move forward to another final.

In the Under 13 Boys, Matthew Outhwaite beat Jordan Cullaine-Liburd 5, 8, 2 in the semi-final and will be up against Laurence Sweeney who beat Charlie Snelson and Jesse Kendrick-Hill in the group stages. The Under 11 Boys final will be between Niall Herbert and Simon Thompson. Niall beat Aaron Warnes 3, 1, 2 and Simon beat Charlie Snelson -9, 2, 7, 4.

The Under 11 Girls will be contested by Jessica Champion, who beat Zoe Schofield 2, 3, 2 in the semi and Ruth Mackay, who beat Olivia Fletcher 13, 6, 6.

Tristan Gretton and Luke Hobbins, as number one seeds, will be favourite to take the Junior Doubles crown having disposed of Charlotte Spencer and Laurence Sweeney 4, 8, -9, 10. Trying to stop them will be Jack Randle and Ben Meakin, who beat Richard Pittaway and Jesse Kendrick-Hill 3, 3, 6.

Moving on to the veteran events, the Veteran Singles final will be between Ron Vose and Ian Randle. Ron was imperious in his semi-final win over Earl Sweeney, while Ian Randle battled his way past Simon Griew in five sets.

Ron Vose will also be appearing in the Over 50 Singles, having beaten Mike Bishop in the semi-final. He will face Mike Bridgman who defeated Malcolm Macfarlane at the same stage.

Derek Harwood will be putting his defensive skills to the test in the Over 60 Singles, moving into the final at the expense of Reg Warnes. Trying to find a way past Derek will be Brian Aston, who beat Gordon Tucker at the semi-final stage.

The two events played at the weekend were the Handicap Singles and the Parent/Child Doubles. In the Handicap, Holly Thompson made the most of her head-start over Jack Randle and triumphed 61/49. In the other half of the draw, Holly's brother Simon beat Navinder Matharu 61/50 to set up a family affair in the final. Simon will start the final with a 31/12 advantage over his sister. In the Parent/Child Doubles, the early rounds provided, as is the intention of the event, some good-natured encounters with a number of the League's youngest players turning out and acquitting themselves well against the mostly more experienced adults. The final, however, should be a far more competitive affair as Earl and Laurence Sweeney will face Ian and Jack Randle in a contest that will have two of the League's strongest adults and two of the League's most talented cadets on show.

In addition to the finals already mentioned, the following will also be played on Finals Night. Due to lack

of entries, it was unfortunately not possible to hold preliminary rounds, but in action will be: Samantha Meredith/Charlotte Spencer v Sue Clarke/ Tracey Fletcher in the Ladies Doubles; Holly Thompson v Charlotte Spencer in both the Junior and Under 15 Girls; Holly Thompson v Jessica Campion in the Under 13 Girls.

Finals Night will be held at Kenilworth Wardens Club on Saturday 15th March. Holly Thompson and Jessica Campion will get things started with the Under 13 Girls Singles at 2.00pm, with the Men's Singles final due to start at 10.20pm to conclude the evening. Spectators are more than welcome at the event and the League hope that a great many of its members, family and friends will attend to help make the evening one to remember. A bar will be open at Kenilworth Wardens and a light buffet is provided free of charge. The full schedule for the evening is available at <http://leamingtontt.tripod.com>