

# Derbyshire Win Northern Cup

Success For Boys Under 13 Squash Team  
3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> May 2008 - Prestbury Squash Club

The 2008 Northern Cup saw 9 counties competing from all over the north of England. Day 1 consisted of 3 pools of 3 teams, each playing for positions on day 2. Winners progressing into the finals and for the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> place teams, playoffs for positions 4-6 & 7-9.

Each match the best of 5 strings, each played to the best of 5 games.

Saturdays pool matches produced a resounding victory for Derbyshire. Competing against Cumbria and Leicestershire, Derbyshire dominated throughout, beating Cumbria 5-0 and Leicestershire 4-1. The victory confirming their place in Sunday's finals against Yorkshire (the favourites) & Northumbria.

Yorkshire began Sunday's finals with a comfortable 4-1 win over Northumbria to set up what was considered to be the final against Derbyshire. Could the power of Derbyshire's top 3 overcome the strength in depth of the Yorkshire team?

Despite brave performances from Alex Ross (#5) and Alex Wilson (#4) Yorkshire's strength in depth earned them a 2-0 lead after the first round of matches. Russell Clark turned the tide with a comfortable 3-0 win at string 1 to make it 2-1 and a comfortable victory looked on the cards at string 3 when James Blythe went 2-0 up, having dropped just 3 points. However he stuttered, narrowly losing the next two games 10/9, 10/9, but showed enormous courage to fight back and win the 5<sup>th</sup> game 9/6, levelling the match at 2-2. Adam Turner, playing at string 2 had the responsibility of closing out the match, something that looked a formality after he won the first game 9/2. However, just like James he faltered, losing the next two games before coming back and winning the final two games to secure a 3-2 victory for Derbyshire.

Celebrations were short as Northumbria were not to be underestimated and the team were soon focusing on one last match.

Again, Derbyshire found themselves 2-0 down after the opening 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> string matches despite gritty performances by Alex Wilson at #4 who lost 3/1 and Oliver Favell at #5 who narrowly lost 9/6 in the 5<sup>th</sup> game.

All was not lost though as the Derbyshire top 3 had looked extremely strong throughout the tournament; they just needed 3 wins from 3 matches! Russell Clark turned the tide and set the winning trend in motion, brushing aside his opponent 3-0, dropping just 3 points in the process. The emphatic win was followed by another comfortable 3-0 win for Adam Turner levelling the tie at 2-2.

Enter James Blythe to play the decider (“no pressure, it’s all on you James!”) and after losing the first game 9/0 James and Derbyshire looked doomed. But James came back out and produced an amazing display of character as he turned the match around, winning the next three games 9/6 9/2 9/2, winning the tie and the cup for Derbyshire.

Congratulations to all the players, they all worked hard and were great ambassadors for Derbyshire squash; I was certainly proud to be their manager for the Day! One final note, the organisers and host club made a special point during the presentations of praising the players for their immaculate behaviour throughout the tournament, again something that the players, their parents and the county can be proud of.

Well done everyone

Graham Clark



# Derbyshire Squash Rackets Association

Press Release - 13 May 2008

<http://www.derbyshiresquash.co.uk>

**Derbyshire Squash AGM 7.30pm 14 May 2008 @ LA Fitness all clubs to send a representative (-5 points if not) & presentation of League Trophies.**

## British Open, Liverpool 6-12 May 2008

<http://www.britishopensquash.com/>

There were mixed fortunes for Derbyshire's players in the Masters events that were concluded on Monday. The Championships were held at Liverpool Cricket and Squash Club and The Northern Squash Club in Crosby. The hot humid weather and the lack of ventilation, especially at the Northern benefited some, but not Neil Nightingale who crashed out in the first round of the O55s to Peter Smith. The two-time England representative's heavy work schedule allowed no preparation time and Nightingale's usual fierce fighting spirit was strangely absent. Nightingale went down 0-9 9-3 9-6 9-2.

Greg Loach fared better in the O45s reaching his anticipated quarter-final berth against Steve Calvert. However, Calvert halted further progress as he blitz Loach in the first two games, before Loach got a toe hold in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The fiery hot courts and low ceilings did little to help Loach's cause, but he fought hard to take the 3<sup>rd</sup> 9-6. On the receiving end of some tortuous rallies in the 4<sup>th</sup>, Loach was unable to pressurise Calvert consistently enough.

Lesley Sturgess was denied her chance to revenge her defeat at the Nationals when 2<sup>nd</sup> seed Victoria King withdrew late from the O45s. Sturgess comfortably won her opening match before her bye took her through to the semi-finals. Sturgess' preparation for the event wasn't the best as she was kept off the court by successful major surgery, but she fought hard

for 98 minutes with the eventual winner Mandy Akin in what would have been a worthy final.



Lesley Sturgess O45 Semi-finalist British Open 2008

Jason Foster fulfilled his 5/8 seeding, beating Wilford Wilks 9-0 9-6 9-0 in the first round of the O35s. England reserve Darren Gray looked like he could cause Foster some problems, but it was Foster all the way. Foster anticipated Gray's game well and drove the ball to good lengths, holding the ball and making Gray commit the wrong way. The O35s decamped and moved to LCC for the next round, a move equivalent to that from a frying pan into a fire. Foster's next opponent was Steve Richardson who had just represented Ireland's full team in the European Team Championships. Richardson was electric around the court and put the ball into excellent areas constantly stretching his opponent. Foster chased hard, but could only control a few rallies.

Disappointment for Foster was apparent in his 9-0 9-4 9-3 defeat.

Fellow England O35, Kevin White was unable to capitalise on the absence of a few top names from the draw and bowed out also to Steve Richardson in the semi-finals on the all-glass show court in the Echo Arena, Liverpool. White's 3/4 seeding meant he had two easy rounds before meeting a 5/8 seed. However, Germany's Predi Frische had escaped the seedings committee and White's England Team mate and 5/8 seed Glen Ragou was to pay with a 3-1 defeat. Frische and looked confident and dangerous as he went into a 1-0 lead. White was unable to stem the flow of his mistakes and the German's forehand winners. The break between games gave White the time to think his strategy through with his coach Laura Hill. Things were clearly put right at the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and a consistent length and tighter short play saw the second go to White's way. The third followed quickly for White to go 2-1 up. Frische went 3-0 up in the 4<sup>th</sup>, but White upped the pace to sweep through to 7-3, before capturing the match 4-9 9-2 9-0 9-5.



Kevin White O35 Semi-Finalist British Open

Richardson was in fine form in the semi-final taking to the all-glass court superbly well. White never settled and playing catch up squash on the all-glass court simply led to unforced errors. An agonisingly poor performance from White was epitomised by a mere 32 minutes on court. Richardson adapted much the better to the event's third venue to take a well deserved 9-5 9-0 9-4 win.

In the final No.2 seed Richardson took a 2-0 and 5-1 lead over the No. 1 seed David Champion, one of England's Performance Coaches. Champion has rare talent and halted Richardson's progress by slowing the ball down and carefully picking his shots. Champion closed out the 3<sup>rd</sup> and was then unstoppable in the next two to clinch a prized victory 3-9 9-10 9-6 9-5 9-4 in 84 minutes.

## Derbyshire U13s Win Northern Cup



L to R - Alex Wilson, James Blythe, Russell Clark, Oliver Favell, Adam Turner Alex Ross

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Kevin White

DSRA Chairman