

Derbyshire Squash & Racketball

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Derbyshire County Squash Championships 15-17th January 2010, Repton SC.

Repton SC hosted the 2010 Derbyshire County Squash Championships 15-17 January. A further rise in entries on last year confirmed an increase in participation in squash throughout the County. Catching the headlines was the eagerly anticipated clash between Duffield team-mates Laura Hill, the England No.8, and Millie Tomlinson, the National U19 Champion. British Open O40s Champion Kevin White was also seeking his third Men's Open and O35 Championship double and could anyone stop England O45 Greg Loach retaining his crown.

Women's Open Championship

Straight to the Women's Open final; there had been little between Hill and Tomlinson in their practise match in the run up to Tomlinson's attempt on the British Junior Open early in the New Year. A packed gallery saw Hill stretch out to a 5-0 lead in the 1st with Tomlinson struggling to find her rhythm on a hot court and bouncy new ball. Tomlinson got her line and length adjusted and reeled off 6 consecutive points. Hill upped her pace collecting two more points and the two were locked at 7-6 for the next 10 rallies. Hill broke the deadlock with tight angle at the front and a backhand volley kill to go 1-0 up. Now it was Tomlinson's turn to forge ahead and she leapt to a 5-1 lead with some delightful forehand drops. Hill though changed up a gear, pounding the ball into the back corners and surged 6-5 ahead a couple of rallies were exchanged, but Hill was unstoppable as she took the 2nd 9-5. The start of the 3rd was punishing and to her great credit it was Tomlinson who took the upper hand, taking the lead 5-0, Hill came back to 4-5, Tomlinson advanced to 7-4 with some brave shots, but again Hill's pounding drives allowed her to get in front and pick off winners - match point to Hill and an overeager tin gave Tomlinson a chance; she levelled and had her own game point, Hill then levelled again for her 2nd match point, but again the excellent resilience of Tomlinson, still going for her shots, came good as she extended the match to the 4th. The 3rd had been as tough as it gets and the strength of Hill, a full-time firefighter, came to the fore as she took the 4th game 9-0. It was a gutsy performance from Tomlinson which bodes very well for the future. Hill picks up her 7th Derbyshire

County Championship to equal former Great Britain star Pauline White.



Laura Hill clinched her 7th County Title

Men's Open Championship

Kevin White reached the final of the Men's Championship by beating Brampton's Jono Lovegrove, the Derbyshire No.2 U19, in the quarter final and Repton 1st teamer Ben Smith in his first semi-final. Smith putting in a cracking effort to stretch White in three close games 9-7 9-5 9-5. In the other semi-final, Mitch Cook and Ashley Davis (Derbyshire U19 No1) had a serious hour long battle. Cook's ferocious drives kept the ball red hot and very bouncy, giving him the edge in the first two games. As the pace went out of the ball Davis was able to get in front of his opponent and began to cause Cook some trouble around the front. Davis is becoming well known for winning the crucial points and he lived up to that taking the 3rd 10-8. Cook redoubled his power game and with some great straight drives took the 4th 9-5.

Into the final and on paper it looked like White should add a fifth title having never lost to Mitch Cook. 9-2 to White in the 1st and things looked like going his way, but Cook a former England U19 no.2, put together a series of superb drives and some delicate deceptions to take a fast paced 2nd 10-4. White began the 3rd finding a better length and stretching Cook out, preventing him from powering away at his destructive forehands. As White manoeuvred Cook around the court more effectively,

the gaps opened up and Cook's error count mounted. The 3rd went to White 9-2 and the 4th quickly 9-1. A good tournament for Cook, who showed some steel and a touch of class, but a 5th County Men's title for White who showed not signs of slowing down.



Kevin White held on to the Men's and O35 titles for the 3rd successive year

Men's O35 Competition

Kevin White was also in action in the O35 competition and duly reached the final as expected. Waiting there was Repton favourite Simon Price, who had overcome a stiff challenge from Russell Armstrong in the semi-finals. With White taking the ball particularly early and hitting some ruthless boasts Price was happy to get on the score sheet early as the 1st went to White 9-1. Price redoubled his efforts and doubled his points tally in the second; 9-2 to White. As Price became used to the higher than usual pace, he produced some quality volley kills to take a 5-2 lead, but White upped the pace to sweep through to 9-5 and his 5th County O35 title.

Ladies O40 Competition

England O45 and O50 International Lesley Sturgess was hot favourite to retain her title, but was given a decent run in her semi-final against Vikki Sessions; eventually winning 9-5 10-8 9-5. Meanwhile Jane Hill's skill with the racket and decisive finishing gave her a win over Sandra Albinson in the other semi. It was coach versus student in the final, with Sturgess using her outstanding athleticism and speed to combat Hill's normally accurate shots. Sturgess went on to win 9-0 9-2 9-1.

Men's O45 Competition

Ashbourne's Mike Herridge stamped his presence on proceedings as he dished out a 9-0 9-0 9-0 thrashing to Paul Baker in the 1st round, but in typical fashion England O45 Greg Loach replied by letting just one point through against Felix Frixou, the former

Cypriot International. An intriguing semi-final between Herridge and tournament director Lee Watson saw the latter take the initiative with some exceptional volleying. Herridge was kept well out of the first game and looked frustrated not to be able to get into his stride as Watson continually cut the ball low over the tin for winner after winner. However, a tin at 5-3 seemed to dwell on Watson's mind and Herridge pounced on that mistake to great effect taking the 2nd 9-5. From there on it was all Herridge, fully into his stride and covering the court easily, as he crashed through the next two 9-3 9-0.

In the final, Loach was the first to find his game taking a 6-2 lead, but Herridge's good movement and heavy driving saw the gap close to 7-7; a huge rally ended with a tin from Loach and Herridge stood a game point; another huge rally ensued, but it was Herridge who found the tin this time. Loach tightened his game and picked up the next 3 rallies to win the first 10-8. Herridge continued to cause Loach some problems, but after the 1st Loach was able to pick off his winners more easily as the gaps open. Loach took the 2nd 9-1 and the 3rd 9-4 for his 3rd O45 title.



Greg Loach dominated the Men's O45 category

Men's O55 Competition

The withdrawal of England O55 Neil Nightingale, saw 3 time winner and last years Champion John Beastall hot favourite. Nightingale's withdrawal saw Hood Park's Jonathan Brooks through to the final after the opening rounds. Meanwhile John Beastall overcame a tough challenge from Chesterfield's John Pearson 6-9 9-2 10-8 9-1.

Into the final and on a cool court Beastall struggled to find a good length while Brooks revelled in the conditions taking a 6-1 lead. Beastall pegged it back to 8-7, but Brooks' excellent volleying held sway as he

snatched the last three points to surprise Beastall. Beastall put in a huge effort to in the 2nd to keep the ball moving quickly and took the next two comfortably 9-4 9-1 to lead 2-1. Brooks looked out of it at 5-2 down, but his awkward angles around the front began to tire Beastall and he levelled at 7-7; two more volleys gave Brooks an unlikely 4th 9-7. Beastall was well revved up for the 5th, determined to put his name on the trophy he dedicated to this event, and powered through the 5th 9-2 for his 4th O55 title.

Men's Handicap

This event produced some of the most competitive and close matches, thanks to Tournament Director Lee Watson's aplomb at awarding handicaps. Ashley Davis' defence of his title meant he had an uphill battle starting on -16. Jon Brooks (+3) took the 1st, but once David was up to top speed he pounced the next 3. Owen Whitfield held on to the 3rd 15-14 to get passed Qamran Yaqoob. James Blythe (0) also took a game to get going before beating Russell Arnold 3-1. Jim Rosborough completed the semi-final line up with another 3-1 over Michael Albinson. Ashley Davis had earlier lost to Mitch Cook in the main event, but showed great stamina after a slow start against Owen Witfield. 2-0 and 14-10 down is usually terminal, but Davis' big points record saw him pick off the next 5 points to take the match into the 4th. It was almost the same story in the 4th with Witfield desperately trying to win another couple of match points; but they were to elude him as Davis took that 15-14. Witfield kept fighting but the previous games efforts proved too much as davis won through 15-10 in the 5th. James Blythe made it an all junior final as he put out Jim Rosborough 3-1. Two went the distance 15-14.

In to the final and Ashley Davis' previous day's exertions and an incredibly determined James Blythe made the 16 point handicap difference just too much to bridge for Davis. For once Davis was unable to convert a 14-14 game point to extend the match into the 4th game. Tenacious retrievals and a never say die attitude gave Blythe his first men's' county title.

Ladies Handicap

In what could have been a very intriguing contest between Derbyshire team mates, Lesley Sturgess and Heidi Walters, it was the England O45 Sturgess who prevailed over a limping Walters. Walters had injured an ankle in her semi-final of the main event against Millie Tomlinson, but still put up a decent performance threatening in the 1st and 3rd games. Sturgess picked up yet another title 15-13 15-3 16-9.

Plate Events

John Holmes defeated Russell Armstrong 9-0 9-5 8-10 9-5, while Sue Whiting beat Corrine Marsh 15-10 15-11 15-14 in the Ladies handicap plate final.

Kevin White

DSR Chairman