

Derbyshire Squash & Racketball

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Derbyshire Knock-Out Cup Finals

Host club, **The Manor** (Ilkeston) proved an ideal venue for the grand finale of the squash and racketball season. The Manor, under new ownership, has recently undergone a remarkable transformation with 5 pristine courts including 3 glass backs for a large crowd to enjoy the feast of racket sports. England Squash & Racketball were in attendance to award The Manor with a prestigious Gold Charter for their facilities and development infrastructure.

The Manor's teams excelled winning both the Men's Squash Section A and the Racketball finals much to the delight of the enthusiastic Manor supporters. Duffield ladies dominated proceedings in their competition helping to make amends for their Men's team underperformance. LA Fitness 2 won the Section B Squash final and Burton 6 held the flag for their 1st team, the Division 1 League Champions who withdrew at the 11th hour.



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The Manor 1, Men's Knock-Out Cup Section A Winners

L to R James Healey, Neil Rossin, Daryl Selby (Presenting), Jason Walsh, Jon Underhill and a very young looking Craig Walsh

The crowd were treated to an excellent Racketball Exhibition match between the Men's and Ladies National Champions Daryl Selby and Derbyshire's Laura Hill. They both defend their titles starting on 8th May. Selby, the highest climber this season in the PSA World Men's Squash rankings - now No.9, will be hoping Hill only enters the Ladies event after the battle of the sexes ended 2-0 in Hill's favour!

Hill and Selby will be defending their National titles 8-10 May at Edgbaston Priory, Birmingham and will be joined by O50s finalist Nigel Millington and double

title winner Lesley Sturgess who holds both the O45 and O50 titles.



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National Champions Daryl Selby and Laura Hill show the crowd top end Racketball

Men's Section A

A last minute withdrawal by the League Champions, Burton 1, slewed the draw in LA Fitness' favour with them now having no semi-final. In the remaining semi-final Repton 1 took on the home side The Manor 1. Repton had finished the higher league team and would have started slight favourites, but for the absence of their no.1 Mark Fuller.

Repton skipper Lee Watson and James Healey were first on court and Watson was quick to exploit an advantage taking the first game 9-3 using his immaculate tight line to restrict Healey's hard hitting. In the 2nd it was Healey that found his range keeping Watson under constant pressure - 1-1. Watson dug deep and at 6-6 the match was finely balanced. The new courts were fast and this suited Healey with his strong drives, and Watson was left stranded with telling cross courts - 2-1 to Healey and now the 4th game quickly went his way also; 1-0 to the Manor. Shortly after it was 2-0 to the Manor when Craig Walsh completed a 3-1 win over Simon Price. Price took the 2nd when he was able to get in front of Walsh and cut the ball into the front corners, but Walsh, another power merchant, found his width again to take the match with some comfort.

Mitch Cook looked threatening in the opening two against The Manor's Neil Rossin, but was left a little short at the end of each game. Rossin looked likely to close the match out in the 3rd, but Cook was having none of it, saving two match points before taking the 3rd 10-9. Rossin's movement now looked laboured and Cook's invigorated. Clean, decisive shots each into space kept Rossin on the move and enabled Cook to open the gaps for some spectacular winners. Cook raced through the 4th and 5th games each 9-1 to take an excellent victory 3-2. Repton's Ben Smith applied himself well and with the match still alive fought hard recovering a game to 1-2 against Jason Walsh. Walsh likes to open the court up and with Smith's good racket-work it looked like this one could go to the wire at 6-6 in the 4th; however, Smith was tiring quickly having to fetch Walsh's floated chips into the front and in need of quick winners the error came to give Walsh and the Manor the win they needed. Walsh eventually won 9-5 9-6 2-9 9-6. Richard Woodroffe beat Jon Underhill 3-2 at no.1 in the final and dead rubber.

To the final: The Manor versus LA Fitness the current holders. James Healey blasted his way to an early 1-0 lead over Neil Thorpe who was unable to cope with the initial pace. Thorpe tightened his line and pegged away feeding off some erratic drives from Healey, 9-3 to Thorpe and 1-1. Healey recalibrated his sights and again forcefully took control and the 3rd 9-4. Healey went 6-2 up in the 4th, but began to lose concentration as tiredness set in after playing in the racketball final earlier. Thorpe saw his chance, first levelling and then moving to 8-6. Healey turned on the power again to level at 8-8, but some crafty ball placement by Thorpe saw him extend the match to a 5th. Healey was now pretty tired and the errors came; Thorpe minimising his. It was a great start for LA as Thorpe held out 9-5 to take the first rubber. On the adjoining court Paul Howell was blown away by the even harder hitting Craig Walsh 9-0 9-0; Howell had a chance in the 3rd at 7-7, but two lusty blows by Walsh sealed it for The Manor to draw 1-1. Jason Walsh followed brother Craig on court and was similarly efficient defeating Mike Lambert 9-0 9-5 9-5. LA Fitness's No1 Ryan Loska is impressively fit and he proved too much for Jon Underhill in a reversal of their recent League encounters. Underhill perhaps looked a little below par.

The match was at 2-2 and into the deciding rubber between Neil Rossin, for The Manor and LA's Greg Loach. Rossin would normally be the clear favourite

despite Loach's England O45 experience. However, Rossin had been turned over the day before by Repton's Mitch Cook. Rossin started well, sharply on the ball and moving Loach constantly 9-5 in the first quickly turned to 2-0 with the 2nd going 9-4. Loach already looked tired, but he managed to find that extra will to win he has shown so many times. Point by point, some incredibly long rallies were played, Loach got to 7-3. Rossin responded edging his way to 7-7, but a huge rally saw Rossin slow and Loach finished it with a pulsating forehand crosscourt kill. A similarly risky but perfectly executed backhand nick-kill gave Loach a game ball which he duly won with an excellent backhand down the wall. Loach was now hunting the ball around the court, defying those tired legs and with an extra whip on the racket forged a handy lead that Rossin couldn't break down. Rossin didn't move for the last rally and a real upset was on the cards. The last two games to Loach 9-7 9-2 gave him all the momentum and he pounced on a couple of short shots from Rossin and took an early 2-0 lead in the 5th. Rossin is made of solid teak and put an increasingly sore foot to the back of his mind as he began to grind down Loach. A couple of incredibly long rallies took the wind out of Loach and Rossin's points tally rattled up; the last few points came quickly for Rossin to take the 5th 9-2 and hand the Men's Knock-Out title to The Manor.

Ladies

Only one semi-final was played on Saturday with Ashbourne automatically making the final after the Burton 1 withdrew. To see who would meet Ashbourne, Trent Vale played Duffield in a close fought battle, Duffield narrowly edging the win 3-2 with their middle order players putting in good performances to take them into the final. Lynn Morris grabbed a decisive 1st game 10-9 against Sheila Alcock at No.5, going on to win 3-0 and Heidi Walter's excellent mobility handing her a 3-0 win over Nicky Hayward to top and tail Duffield. Naomi Hardy, Anne Mason and Donna Jackson providing Duffield's 3 wins.

With Ashbourne only managing to field a 4 person team, Duffield immediately took the initiative and the lead, and when Naomi Hardy, one of Duffield's up and coming junior players put in another very strong performance following her semi-final victory, the stage was set for the Duffield team to take another League and Cup double. Next on court was Duffield unstoppable veteran Anne Mason, who showed all her court guile and accurate play to overcome the very strong game of Jane McIntyre. In a seesaw match,

Anne managed to out manoeuvre and eventually outplay Jane putting the match out of Ashbourne's grasp, taking Duffield 3-0 ahead. No-body told Sara Snell that the match was mathematically over however, as she battled and fought incredibly hard, pushing her body to an absolute standstill in the match of the final against Duffield's no2 Donna Jackson. Snell made a positive start trying to instil some pride back into the Ashbourne contingent, taking the first 6 points, and eventually winning the opening game 10-8. Donna however soon overcame her nerves and put in some good hard rallies to physically tire her opponent winning the next two games 9-3, 9-6. It look liked the younger fitter player had the match in her grasp and was about to wrap it up in 4. However Snell had other thoughts as the Ashbourne player hit a purple patch, dug deep into her reserves and took the match to a deciding game, winning the 4th 9-0. That effort took its toll though as again Donna extended the rallies in the 5th until Sara could no-longer run, and eventually came out on top giving the Duffield player the win, 3-2. Last on court then were the no1, and it looked like Duffield's Nicky Haywood took out some frustrations at having lost her semi-final match and being last on court. Haywood's clean hitting meant she lost only 2 points to Ashbourne's Edwina Edwards making it 5-0 for the Duffield Victory.

Racketball

The semi-finals had been played earlier in the week and a great fillip for hosts **The Manor** was their 2nd team's victory over the undefeated League champions **Duffield 1**. Duffield were absent their No.1 and 2, but as the final turned out they were worthy finalists. **The Manor 1** had beaten **Brampton Manor** in the other semi-final.

The intra-club team rivalry was much in evidence as the 2nd team were fully committed and the 4-0 scoreline really did no justice to their efforts. Andy Horsley narrowly missed out on the 2nd game against James Healey as he still went 2-1 up. Healey though had put enough work into Horsley's legs to take the next 2 games comfortably. Nick Tatham had chances to take the 1st and 3rd games against National O50s finalist Nigel Millington, but the wily 1st teamer kept Tatham at bay 17-15 15-8 17-15. Dave Hudson recovered from 2-0 down against Craig Walsh to 2-2, saving a match point in the 4th. A slow start in the 5th put paid to Hudson's aspirations as Walsh grabbed that 15-10 to hand the match and Racketball KO Cup title to **The Manor 1**. Todd McQuilkin's match with Jason Walsh was an action replay, with McQuilkin

deft touch at the front holding sway in the 3rd and 4th games. At 10-10 in the 5th Walsh found some delightful length shots to go to match point. McQuilkin replied with 2 winners to serve at 12-14, but the wheels finally fell off and Walsh was home and dry.

Men's Section B

Burton 4 were grateful that **Repton 2** withdrew from their semi-final giving their neighbours a ticket through to the final. In the remaining semi-final John Holmes and Keith Howard won the opening two matches for **LA Fitness 2** against **Brampton Manor 3**. Nick Melton got Brampton back in the running beating Garth Birtles 3-1. Jono Lovegrove kept the match alive for Brampton, levelling at 2-2, when he beat Rob Sillett in a nail biting 3-2. Sillett missing out on 2 match points in the 4th game. Ian MacKinnon was on top form for LA Fitness and held on to a crucial 2nd game 10-8 just when Steve Barker looked to be getting on top. MacKinnon held his game together well in the 3rd to put LA Fitness through to the final.

The Final: **LA Fitness 2** were the favourites and their close semi-final had certainly sharpened their games. John Holmes always looked good for a win against Ray Salt while Keith Howard recovered well from losing the 2nd 10-8 to take the 3rd 9-6 and hang on to the 4th 10-8 against Sam Marsden to put LA 2-0 up. Garth Birtles was in top form defeating Carl Smith 9-2 9-3 9-1 for LA 2 to take the Section B title. Rob Sillett added a 4th rubber beating Gary Holmes 3-0 which left the talented Guy Litherland to record Burton's only success; a straight games win over Ian MacKinnon.

Men's Section C

In the closest match of the tournament Duffield 5 slithered through against Lumb Farm 3 3-2. Richard Grindrod edging out Steve Granger 10-8 in the 5th to win the match for the Duffield side. Lumb Farm's Pete Wilson had earlier beaten Perry McKellen 10-8 in the 4th a feat just eclipsed by Paul Catermole's 10-9 victory in the 4th against Mark Benson. Fortunately, Steve Sims and Mike Walker were at hand to allow Duffield's hero Richard Grindrod to seal the contest.

In the other semi-final, **Burton 6** beat **LA Fitness 4** 3-2 despite Owen Whitfield being taken ill during the match. Father Doug proved too strong for Alan

Haggar and along with wins for Lewis and Paul Baker eased them through to the final.

Absent Owen Whitfield, Burton 6 had just that bit too much for Duffield 5 in the final, although Richard Grindrod won at 1st string against Paul Baker and Mike Walker's epic with Doug Whitfield could have gone either way. Credit must go to Whitfield's fighting spirit and his experienced court craft gave him the match 9-10 10-8 10-9 9-6. Tom Stewart, Lewis Baker and Paul Morris all ran out comfortable winners.

Kevin White
DSR Chairman