



Hampshire Junior Closed 2019 Report

On the last weekend of September over 100 young athletes from Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Guernsey took part in the Hampshire Squash Junior County Closed, enjoying (officially) the worlds fittest and best sport. The event was hosted at the Winchester Rackets and Fitness Center who have some of the best facilities in the county with 6 courts including 2 glass backs for enhanced spectating. Hampshire is fortunate to have some of the strongest juniors in England and Europe playing in the county; competing were some potential world stars of the future and the tournament proved to be a magnificent showcase for their skill, determination and sportsmanship. Up for grabs were titles in the mixed under 9's, and the girls and boys under 11, 13, 15, 17 and 19 age categories.

The quality of the competition throughout the weekend was superb. A testament to the coaches' and parent's support and the regular junior leagues that happen throughout the year.

The lower age groups were well attended. In the mixed under 9's Phoebe Griffiths, Sofia Mackenzie and Friedrich Terhalle, all topped their group stages, to set up a final round robin. Phoebe Griffiths dominated this round to take the title, with Friedrich coming second after a very close match, 1-2 (11-10, 8-11, 4-11) with Sofia. Phoebe Griffiths was to also appear in the girls under 11 final, where she played the number one seed Sophie Vail. The final which was characterised by some very long rallies, went to seeding, with Sophie Vail prevailing (no pun intended), winning 3-1 (9-11, 11-6, 12-10, 11-6).

Seb-Cairns-Allen, the number one seed, was the victor in the boys under 11, winning 3-0 in the final to Cameron Vail. The fight for the third/ fourth place was a very close match where William Aldridge pipped Oliver Flett 3-2.

The girls under 13 finals was a round robin, with Hattie Broadbridge, last years under 11 champion, coming out on top. Olivia Fry finished second and Bethan Cooling a close third, where Bethan had taken games off both the other girls.

George Griffiths, 2018 U11 champion (and older brother to Phoebe), headed the boys U13 section without dropping a game! With Matt Hartley second. Matt had had a mammoth semi final against Jerome Porter (3-2, 8-11, 7-11, 11-6, 11-8 and 13-11) to make it to the final, Jerome just had enough left in the tank to win his play off to finish third.

The largest number of competitors were in the boys under 15 category and involved a pre qualifier and 3 group stages. Making it to the finals where Joe Pannell (the number one seed), Toby Young (a strong left hander from Guernsey who had had a terrific match with fellow islander Jordan Smith in the group stages), and Jack Mascall (a Winchester local playing at his home club, narrowly beating Freddie Fentum and Harry Flett in his group). Joe unfortunately had to pull out after the group stages, however, the match between Toby and Jack was a classic. Jack took a two-game lead, controlling the T and directing the play, but Toby did not give up, saving 2 match points in the third, eventually taking it 13-11. Toby then upped the pace of the match, taking the ball early and hitting it hard, and Jack struggled to focus, finding it hard to get good length, losing the fourth 9-11. The fifth game went down

to the wire as both boys tired. Both had a match point, but the local favourite won through, 13-11, to great applause from an appreciative crowd.

The most notable performance of the whole tournament came from Megan Light, who one observer called “a squash machine” that weekend. Megan, last years girls U13 champion, and still only 12 years old, made it to the girls under 15 and girls U17 finals! In the under 15 final her opponent was Olivia Keefe, the number one seed, and in the under 17 final, she was playing Florence Kersley, also the number one seed. In both matches Megan played patiently, employing very tight drives to good length, forcing her opponents into making mistakes, that were ruthlessly put away. Under pressure, Megan’s defensive play was also excellent, using height to great effect. Megan “the machine” won both titles without dropping a game, a massive achievement.

The girls under 19 final was between Olivia Bessant (last years girls under 17 winner) and Florence Kersley (last years girls under 15 winner). Olivia proved to be too strong for Florence (who had made it to two finals herself), and took the title 3-0. Olivia had a great weekend as she also took on the boys in their under 17 competition, where she finished a very impressive 6th place! (Narrowly missing out on 5th losing 3-2 to Harris Faizi, last years boys under 15 winner)

The boys under 17 competition had some very strong players, nearly all can be seen regularly representing clubs in the Hampshire men’s leagues. The number one seed was Joe Sutton-Welch (previous holder of the boys under 11, 13 and 15 age groups and a home grown Winchester Rackets team player), the number two seed was Alex Broadbridge (previous holder of the boys under 11 and 13 age groups and still only 12 years old!). The two top seeds made it to the final, but not without some good matches beforehand, where Joe had concurrent 3-1 victories against Alex Pooley and Tom Johnson, and Alex Broadbridge had 3-0 victories against Olivia Bessant and Harry Thomas. The quality of the squash and the determination shown between two well matched players in the final was amazing. The first four games ebbed and flowed with first Alex, then Joe gaining advantage, both covering the court at breakneck speed. Alex took the first 11-8. He then took the second after coming back from several game points down 16-14. Joe looked much stronger physically than Alex after this, the second game had obviously taken a lot out of him, and he lost the next two games 11-8. Both players were now very tired. Alex though, found some hidden energy reserves, and incredibly increased the pace in the fifth, hunting volleys and controlling the T. The change worked, and Alex won 11-3, and the match 3-2.

As the under 17 boy’s final was occurring, the adjacent court hosted the boys under 19 final between Alfie Lawes and Toby Ponting. Alfie and Toby are training partners and have been playing each other for years. It was bound to be a close match as they knew each other’s games so well. This proved to be the case, as in each game the maximum points difference was 3! Alfie won 3-1 (11-8, 10-12, 11-9, 12-10). The match finished with a huge roar from Alfie which actually caused a small pause in play in the under 17 final as Joe and Alex waited for the walls to stop shaking!

It would be impossible to include a summary of every match played over the weekend, but a full list of the weekend competitors, results and draws can be found at

www.estournaments.leaguemaster.co.uk/cgi-county/icounty.exe/showhome?

We would like to humbly thank the tournament sponsors, Titan and Tempura for their support of Hampshire Junior squash for this and other events. A big thank you must also go to the tournament organiser, Tim Vail and a host of other volunteers for making everything run so smoothly, and also thanks to the venue, Winchester Rackets for hosting the tournament.

Report gratefully received by Hampshire Squash from Bob Broadbridge