

No Joy For Table Tennis Player Floydie

Malcolm Floyd returned home empty handed after taking part in two semi-finals of the New Milton Table Tennis Clubs annual tournaments last week. It was always going to be a tough evening for him as he was facing last year's winners in both cases.

First up was the semi of the Vets (Over 40s) against Div 2 teammate Bob Fagan who won the event last year. This event is handicapped although there wasn't much in it for this match with Floyd off 14 and Fagan with a 15 start. Floyd went into a three-point lead in the first end, but Fagan attacked well to recover and take it at deuce 32-30. Stung by this reverse, Floyd easily took the next end 31-22, but he never really got into the third end which Fagan took comfortably at 31-24 to win the match.

The other Vets match was between last year's losing finalist Shaun Newcomb (+12) and John Parkhouse (+21). The handicapping appeared to favour the ever-improving Parkhouse as he attacked convincingly to take the first end 31-26. However, wheelchair player Newcomb played doggedly to take the second end 31-28 to set up a thrilling finale, which didn't disappoint the onlookers. Newcomb chipped away at the handicap differential but Parkhouse brought out some big hits at the end to win the match at 31-29.

Floyd's other semi was the Scratch Singles against last year's winner, the A team's Steve Hemmings. It didn't bode too well for Floyd as he lost in two straight ends (11-6, 11-2) against Hemmings in the earlier round's best of three. It looked like déjà vu all over again as Floyd went down 9-11 and 2-11 in the first two ends, but then played out of his skin to take the third 11-8. However, this was only a temporary respite as Hemmings' class came to the fore as he stifled Floyd by 11-5 to take the match.

The other Scratch Singles semi was between the A team's Brian Vibert and the C team's Mick Barry who beat Vibert's teammate Terry Jenvey in his quarterfinal. Vibert demonstrated his premier class with a first end 11-2 demolition, but Barry came close in the second to just lose out at deuce by 10-12. However, it was the mixture as before in the third end as Vibert brooked no nonsense to take it comfortably at 11-4 and sail through to the final.

The two finals will therefore see the last year's winners attempt to defend their titles. Bob Fagan will have his work cut out to overcome a handicap deficit of six against the big-hitting John Parkhouse in the Vets, and a battle royal is in prospect as Steve Hemmings faces his teammate Brian Vibert in the Scratch Singles.