

It's A Vibert v Hemmings Final Again!

There was some excellent table tennis on show at the New Milton Table Tennis Club's Annual Scratch Singles tournament last week. Although the turnout was down on last year, the event attracted last year's finalists Brian Vibert (Winner) and Steve Hemmings (Runner Up) who are both in the Club's A team (Premier).

The 13 players were drawn into three groups of three and one group of four for the first round robin. The club's top players in attendance, Brian Vibert, Steve Hemmings and Shaun Newcomb were seeded to ensure that they didn't face each other in the early rounds. The format reverted to "11 up", best of five games.

In the round of four, Vibert stormed into the quarter finals without dropping an end, leaving Roy Hobbs, Ian Linney and Bev Scott-Johns trailing in his wake. Hobbs only lost to Vibert so he went through as runner-up. Hobbs really had his work cut out against Scott-Johns, however, as Scott-Johns went 2-1 up having nicked the first and third ends by 13-11. Hobbs restored parity by winning the fourth end by 11-7 to set up a thrilling finale. It was nip and tuck all the way through and a relieved Hobbs finally edged it by 13-11.

There was a fascinating tussle in the first group of three as Shaun Newcomb, Terry Jenvey and Bob Fagan all won one each. Newcomb beat Jenvey in a thrilling five-ender, but Jenvey went on to beat Fagan in another match that went all the way. Fagan got his by getting the better of Div 1 teammate Newcomb over four ends, but it was nail-biting stuff as Fagan took the third and fourth by 12-10 each, having dropped the second end. Further progression was down to sets won/lost, so Fagan went through to the quarterfinals as winner, and Jenvey as runner-up.

Steve Hemmings won his group by beating Gerard Redman and James Lewis. Hemmings didn't drop an end in the process, but Lewis nearly caused an upset as he took Hemmings to 12-14 in their first end. Hemmings wasn't having any more nonsense and took the next two 11-7 and 11-3. Redman went through as runner up by seeing off his Div 3 teammate Lewis in three straight sets.

Malcolm Floyd won his group as he beat Div 5's Danny Williams and Richard Barrett in three straight sets. Barrett caused Div 1's Floyd some problems in their second end but Floyd overcame a large deficit to nick it at 13-11 and went on to win the third and final set a bit more comfortably at 11-7. Williams also beat Barrett in three straight to go through as runner-up.

In the quarterfinals, Brian Vibert saw off Gerard Redman in three straight sets, as did Bob Fagan to Danny Williams. Steve Hemmings did likewise to Terry Jenvey and the only match to last a bit longer was Malcolm Floyd's against Roy Hobbs. Floyd just shaded the first 12-10 but got well beaten by Hobbs 5-11 in the second. That proved to be Hobbs' high water mark however as Floyd took the next two 11-7, 11-6 to go through to the semi-final.

Vibert was still determined not to drop an end and it was the "mixture as before" as he beat Fagan by three straight ends in their semi-final. Floyd went 4-0 up against Hemmings in the first end of their semi but Floyd saw his lead and his hopes of causing an upset evaporate as Hemmings won out by 11-7. It went rapidly downhill for Floyd after that as Hemmings won the next two 11-5 and 11-3 to emulate Vibert in not dropping an end in the entire event.

And so the scene is set for a repeat of last year's final between Vibert and Hemmings, with Hemmings out for revenge against his Premier teammate.

The club's Handicap Doubles event was held the previous week and Shaun Newcomb was looking to extend his two-year run of winning with different partners. He got through to the semi finals with drawn partner Rhys Jessop but was beaten by his Div 1 teammates Bob Fagan and Malcolm Floyd.

Fagan & Floyd will meet Ian Linney & Matthew Daish in the final. Fagan & Floyd playing off +14 will have their work cut out against Linney and nine-year old Daish who have a +21 start. Daish's attack is improving all the time and Linney is returning to form and fitness after a long lay-off due to injury, so their +7 advantage looks quite formidable. Linney and Daish will also take hope from the fact that they took the first end against Fagan & Floyd in the group stage. Should be a cracking match!