

Glory For New Milton Table Tennis Players In Championships

The two weeks of the Bournemouth and District Table Tennis Association's Annual Championships culminated in a very well attended Finals Night on Friday 26th February.

The three finalists from the New Milton Club distinguished themselves by winning their finals. Gerard Redman faced Merton's Rob Searle in the Div 3 final and could be forgiven for feeling a tad nervous as he lost to Searle in the group stage last week. However, Redman put that behind him to play some good attacking tennis to win the title decisively in three straight ends.

The capacity crowd were given the rare treat of watching a doubles final where a wheelchair player (Shaun Newcomb) played alongside an able-bodied partner (Brian Vibert) in their match against Merton's Phil Beeden and Danny Allen. With Vibert and Newcomb being allowed to return randomly, the crowd witnessed some intriguing if somewhat bewildering passages of play. Milton got off to an inauspicious start by losing the first end 8-11, but they showed how they beat the Merton duo in the group stage by taking the next three ends to land the doubles title.

In the week's run-up to the Finals Night, five New Milton players entered the various events on offer during the second week of tournaments. The H team's Richard Barrett deserves a special mention because he gamely entered four events (Bournemouth Closed, Bournemouth Closed Handicap, the Vets 60+ and the Vets 70+). He was unable to emerge from any of the group stages but took comfort in beating club mate Brian Theaker in the inaugural Vets 70+ event.

Shaun Newcomb, Sam Watkins and Bev Scott-Johns all entered the Vets 50+ event and were fortunately drawn into separate groups. Newcomb was drawn into a very tough group comprising Merton's Danny Allen (Premier) and Bournemouth Sports' Ken Parradine (Div 1). He lost to Allen and surprisingly fell victim to Parradine whom he beat in the Vets 40+ last week, so could proceed no further. Watkins, who normally plays in Div 5, battled bravely against Geoff Ware (Div 1) and Deryk Thrower (Div 3), but understandably went home empty-handed. The only Milton player to emerge from the group stage was Div 3's Scott-Johns who came runner-up in his group. He went on to face Newcomb's nemesis, Parradine (Div 1) in the quarterfinals, but lost in three straight ends.

Redman, Newcomb and Vibert look forward to receiving their winners' trophies at the Bournemouth and District Annual Presentation evening to be held in May.