

Regional Qualifiers 5/6 February 2011

On Sunday 6th February, over 40 keen table tennis players, aged between 10 and 14, arrived at Cirencester to compete in the Table Tennis South West Regional Qualifying tournament for the Nationals Finals. From the boys and girls U11 to U14 categories, four qualification places, in each age group were up for grabs.

Each competitor was allowed to enter two events – their normal age category and the next age category up. This meant that some competitors played seven matches in the morning and seven more in the afternoon -a demanding day by anybody's standards.

For some of our players, this was the last competition in a gruelling weekend of table tennis, with a match against Wales in Okehampton on Friday night, the Dorset Schools individual championships at Portchester School, Bournemouth on Saturday and the Regional qualifiers on the Sunday.

Finn Morgan-Bayliss, even though he has only been playing for 18 months, demonstrated his class by winning the U13 boys and coming fourth in the U14 boys therefore qualifying for both age groups. Owen Thomas, in his first major tournament, qualified in the U11 boy's category alongside Ruth Pickering in the U13 girl's category.

Emma Blachford, who has been playing for about the same time as Finn, qualified as 1st reserve in the U14 girls and Jamie Trevillion finished a creditable sixth in the U14boys also qualifying as a reserve. Oliver Crossley, drawn in the U14 group stages 'group of death', managed two excellent wins out of five and will take on board a lot from the experience.

Matthew Daish, being born in Hampshire, went over to Basingstoke on the previous day for the South Regional Qualifiers. After a round robin event he did extremely well to finish 2nd in his group in the U11 category to also book his place on the bus to Doncaster.

In all, an excellent weekend for our young players. The U11 – U14 National Championships will be taking place in Doncaster at the end of April.