

REPORT ON NEWCASTLE SENIOR OPEN TABLE TENNIS GRAND PRIX

HELD 11TH-12TH OCTOBER.

Three members of the Jersey table Tennis Association [Craig Gascoyne, Nicola Duke and Josh Band] made the long trip to the fourth of the season's major U.K. tournaments.

Potted results as follows:

SATURDAY 11TH:

- **Women's Singles Band 2.** Excellent performances by Nicola Duke beating all three competitors in her group who were all ranked much higher than her. The highlight being a five set thriller against Emily Standing from Cumbria. Duke was pegged back from a 2-0 lead to parity but took the fifth 11/9 with some controlled driven forehands. She progressed to the semis as group 2 winner but was finally beaten by the No.3 seed Chloe Whyte in four games.
- **Women's Band 3.** Duke had another epic battle and resulting win in this re-arranged Band before being eliminated. Her match against Josie Bruce from Scotland [an Island Games representative for Shetland] had the match score of: 11/3, 19/17, 7/11, 7/11, 11/4.
- **Men's Singles Band 4.** Josh Band had been drawn in a tricky group and had to face the experienced No. 4 seed Graeme Barella in his first match. Despite a spirited performance Band lost in three games, 7/11, 3/11, 10/12. This left him having to win his next two group games to get to the knockout stage. This seemed a tall order as both were appreciably higher ranked but the 15 year old De La Salle student recorded two fine wins dropping only one single game. He despatched Liam Carson from Yorkshire 11/7, 12/10, 13/11 and then Dean Rose from Kent 11/8, 11/3, 5/11, 11/4.

He proceeded as group runner-up to face the No. 3 seed; Lloyd Gregory from Avon ranked 62nd Junior in the U.K. Band completely overwhelmed his illustrious opponent with some devastating backhands and loops to win three straight 11/5, 11/5, 11/4. He eventually bowed out in the quarter-finals against Chris Main No. 11 ranked Scotland senior with a commendable score of 7/11, 9/11, 11/9, 6/11.

- **Men's Singles Band 5.** Josh Band was installed as No.1 seed and had two powerful wins in his group against Adrian Barnes from Northumberland, 11/5, 11/8, 11/3; and Neil Raine from Yorkshire, 11/8, 11/3, 12/10. In the last sixteen Band was in control with an 11/3 win in the first game but the No.4 seed Nick Rate narrowly took the next three games to knock the Jersey youngster out.

SUNDAY 12TH:

- **Women's Open Singles.** Nicola Duke had a tough first match against Alice Howard from Lancashire the number 8 seed. Duke played well winning points with well executed smashes but the experience of her opponent finally told as she lost 7/11, 11/5, 8/11, 8/11. She then had to face Josie Bruce again to go through her group as runner up. Once again they had a titanic battle with Duke taking the place in the knockout round 11/6, 11/4, 10/12, 12/10. Duke finally succumbed in the last sixteen against the talented number 6 seed, Hannah Hicks from Hampshire in three straight games.
- **Under 21's Men's Singles.** 15 year old Josh Band was drawn in the very tough Group 2 in this high class event. Despite a spirited performance in all of his three group matches he was defeated by the number 2 seed Damien Nicholls, Zhang Da Shuai and Jake Shaw [both also higher ranked].

- **Men's Open Singles.** Craig Gascoyne, the Island's Development Officer was competing in his first Grand Prix of the season. Installed as seventh seed he had a good start in his group beating the very experienced Julien Gittens from Yorkshire 11/6, 11/4, 11/5. Scott Barton from Scotland surprisingly beat Gascoyne 3—1 9/11, 11/4, 8/11, 9/11 as the Jersey player's style of play suited the Scot's own matchplay. The same was true of Gascoyne's match against Lloyd Gregory where the Avon player fed off the speed of Gascoyne's shots with wining blocks and counters to eliminate the Jersey player 3-0. Josh Band was handed another tough draw in Group 2 but still managed to rattle the No. 2 seed Wang Zheng with a great performance losing narrowly 9/11, 9/11, 8/11. He was out for revenge against Yonatan Caspi from Yorkshire who had beaten him in the previous Grand Prix in Cardiff. Band lost the first two games 7/11, 8/11 but recovered brilliantly with some trademark top spun backhands and forehands down the line to take the next three games 11/5, 12/10, 11/4 and the match 3—2. He was eliminated from the singles by Mark Banks from Berkshire 3-0 who proved to be too strong.
- **In all a good result for the Jersey players.**