

## **Report from Ken Muhr on Essex 4\* Junior Open**

Yolanda King, 12 (from Hastings) and Lewis Gray, 13 (from Benenden), both members of the Weald Table Tennis Club, which is based at Angleley School, Cranbrook, lifted between them 3 singles titles at the prestigious Essex 4\* Junior Open Championships held at Harlow Sports Centre.

Yolanda King had outstanding success, winning both the girls' under 13 and the girls' under 15 singles. As the England no.3 ranked girl, King was the top seed in the under 13 singles, but it is still hard winning when you are expected to. She was given a fright in the quarter finals by the awkward combination bat player, Sushmita Limbu (Middlesex), before battling through 3-1, 11-9, 11-6, 5-11, 11-7. However, she then had comfortable wins over Evengeline Collier (Essex) 11-6, 12-10, 11-3, in the semi-finals and Jessica Dawson (Cleveland) 11-6, 11-1, 11-8, final, to triumph in the event.

Yolanda had a tough 11-8, 9-11, 11-5, 10-12, 11-7 under 15s girls' singles semi-final victory over Oyin Alabi (Essex), before defeating the highly rated second seed, the left-handed Haylee Potts (Hertfordshire) 11-8, 11-8, 7-11, 11-7 in the final to record her second title win.

Lewis Gray, the England no.2 and a pupil of Angleley School, returned to title winning ways when he took the boys' under 13 singles from the second seed position. His biggest test was in his semi-final against England no.4, Ping Ho (Middlesex). At two games to one and 8-10 down, he courageously saved 2 match points with aggressive play to eventually triumph 2-11, 10-12, 11-7, 13-11, 11-5. In the final Gray faced Kent colleague Harry Lumb (Gillingham), with whom he trains at the South East Regional Performance Centre sessions at Angleley School, Lumb having put out the top seed Edward Mitchell (Bucks) 15-13, 11-6, 11-7. Although the play was quite close, Gray got a straight games verdict over Lumb, 11-5, 12-10, 11-9.

Another Weald TT Club and SE Regional Squad member, Sarah Russo (Heathfield, Sussex), did well in reaching the semi-finals of the girls' under 18 singles, before losing 1-1, 9-11, 10-12 to the eventual title winner, Sarra Wang (Essex). Weald Club and Regional Coach, Ken Muhr, was delighted with the results: "When she is playing well with good serves and two wing attack, Yolanda is difficult for other girls to stop. And for Lewis it is a welcome return to success after a relatively lean time recently. These results will give both players confidence for the National Cadet Masters competition in Slough next weekend."

Lewis Gray and Harry Lumb have both been invited to an England Youth Development Squad Training session at the Lilleshall National Training Centre, Shropshire from 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2007.