

REPORT ON NATIONAL CADETS MASTERS FROM KEN MUHR

14 year old Lewis Gray from Benenden, performed above his England ranking at the National Cadet (under 15) Masters competition, a Round Robin of the nation's 14 best players, at Weavers Leisure Centre, Wellingborough over the weekend. Lewis, a member of the Weald TTC and pupil of Angley School, Cranbrook, finished 5th in the boys' singles, and top of those competing from his under-14 age group, with 8 wins to 5 losses.

Lewis, the England ranked no.9, recorded successes over higher England ranked players Ping Ho (Middlesex, ranked no.5), Graeme Barella (Durham, ranked 6), Zak Zilesnick (Middlesex, no.7) and Alistair Smith (Cornwell, no.8), but narrowly lost in 5 games to the lower ranked Guy Ben-Aroya (Hertfordshire, no.10) and Luca Mariano (Essex, no.12). However, his best performance was in holding a match point over the England no.4, Daniel Lowe (Derbyshire), before going down 6-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6, 10-12. Lewis played very brave, aggressive table tennis, and Lowe, who went on to win the Masters unbeaten, had to pull out courageous winners to beat him. Following from his recent excellent results, Gray is certain to climb several places in the next England rankings.

Unfortunately, after suffering two narrow losses against higher England ranked girls, fellow Weald TT Club member Yolanda King had to pull out of the girls' event owing to sickness. Yolanda, 13, came back from behind to hold a match point over the England no.3, Natalie Slater (Staffordshire), before losing. She also had chances of another win of the England no.4, Lucy Davidson (Derbyshire), who she has twice beaten in recent weeks, but eventually fell 7-11 in the 5th game.

However, Kirsty Wilson, from the Howard Club, Gillingham and who trains at Angley School as part of the South East Regional Squad, came equal 6th in the girls' Round Robin, with very mixed results. She was the only player to defeat the England no.1, Emily Bates (Lincolnshire) - who won the event - and did so in devastating attacking style, 11-9, 11-9, 12-10. She also beat the difficult combination bat player Ayonija Sundararjan (Berkshire), the England no.5 who came 3rd in the event, in straight games. Had she have taken a match point against Tin-Tin Ho (Middlesex), against whom she was edged out 12-10, 11-8, 6-11, 6-11, 11-13, Kirsty would have finished equal 4th, but she also suffered some unexpected losses.