

REPORT ON NATIONAL VETERAN CHAMPIONSHIPS FROM KEN MUHR

It is not only the players at the Wednesday evening South East Regional Performance Centre, Angley School, Cranbrook, who have had a lot of success on the table recently. Last weekend Performance Centre player-coach Ritchie Venner, from Bexhill, Sussex, retained his veterans (over 40s) national men's singles title at the Veterans' Masters Championships in Thornbury, Bristol. From an entry of 102 players, Ritchie narrowly defeated Kent's Joe Kennedy, 9-11, 7-11, 11-5, 11-6, 11-9 in the final.

Venner (currently ranked no.26 man in England, and no.2 veteran) also won the men's doubles, playing with former junior international Adrian Moore, from East Malling, Kent, who also sometimes assists as a practice partner at Cranbrook. Both Venner and Moore come from families with a strong table tennis pedigree. Ritchie's father is former top international Harry Venner, who in the late 40s/50s was England no.2 to twice world champion Johnny Leach, and was also a famous coach, including to stars such as Chester Barnes, the precocious and charismatic England champion of the 1960's. Both Adrian's brother Stephen Moore and sister Theresa Bennett were also junior internationals, and Theresa, a physical education teacher from Polegate, East Sussex, sometimes also assists as a player-coach at the Performance Centre, as well as bringing her sons Jack and Josh to it.

The other chief player-coach at the SE Performance Centre, Angley School, is former Kent men's champion and England top 20 player John Burleton, from Pembury, Kent. As well as coaching at the Performance Centre and at the Weald Table Tennis Club based at Angley School, John also coaches at Hayesbrook School, Tonbridge, which he plans to develop as a feeder centre to Cranbrook.