

## **TABLE TENNIS – GRAY PERFORMS WELL IN EURO CADET 6 NATIONS**

Lewis Gray, the 15 year old Angley School, Cranbrook pupil from Benenden, performed well while representing England in the Stiga European Cadets (under 15) 6 Nations Tournament at Koping, Sweden over the weekend.

Although England lost every match in going down to Germany 7-3, and 6-4 to Sweden, France, Denmark and Holland, Gray, a member of the Weald Club based at Angley School, took 6 out his 10 singles in the team event. He won a singles, and the doubles with Zak Zilesnick, against both Germany and Sweden. In the former match his 6-11, 11-8, 11-7, 7-11, 12-10 victory was over Florian Scheiner who went on to reach the final of the singles knockout, whilst against Sweden he was also only narrowly beaten 9-11, 11-5, 9-11, 11-3, 8-11 by Albin Wemmert, who was to become the singles champion.

Gray won both of his singles in the French match, and a singles apiece against Denmark and Holland. He suffered his only comfortable loss of the weekend in the Dutch match, when he was beaten in straight games by the speedy Koen Hageraats.

He saved his best form for the singles. After losing his opening match in the groups to Andrea Landrieu (France), Gray then had consecutive triumphs over Dominik Scheja (Germany), Rajko Gommers (Holland), Jimmy Jin (Sweden), Sebastian Haack (Denmark) who he had lost to in the team event, and Dang Qiu (Germany), to top the group and qualify for the quarter-final knockout. He then only just failed to repeat his earlier success over Florian Scheiner (Germany), going down 11-9, 9-11, 11-5, 5-11, 7-11 to the eventual losing finalist.

Overall Gray was happy with how he had done. “The difference between England and Europe, is that in Europe the players are much more consistent and every point matters. I played a lot of close 50-50 matches where only one or two points made the difference between winning and losing. Technically the one thing I should improve is mixing my backhand, using more heavy topspin in the rally.”

Meanwhile Gray’s Weald Club colleague, Yolanda King, 14, was less successful at the Slovak Junior Open, part of the International Table Tennis Federation Junior Circuit, in Bratislava, though it was against the best of an older age group (under 18). She got close in almost all of her matches, but she was beaten by Austrian, Romanian, Croatian, Slovenian, Slovakian and Bulgarian opponents in the team and singles events.

King explained: “My backhand was working well but I kept missing my forehand topspins and my technique kept changing, so players played to my forehand all the time. The opposition was good but I could have won a number of matches if I had played as well against the weaker players as I did against the stronger ones, when my forehand worked better. However, playing and training in Slovakia was a good learning experience. I didn’t like the food, but there was plenty of it!”