

LEWIS GRAY BRITISH CHAMPION AND YOLANDA KING DERBY OPEN CHAMPION IN FANTASTIC WEEKEND FOR WEALD PLAYERS

Lewis Gray, 15 from Benenden and Yolanda King, 14 from Hastings led a fantastic weekend of achievement for members of the Angley School, Cranbrook based Weald Table Tennis Club.

Representing England cadet (under 15) boys in the **Junior Home Six Nation Championships** at the Welsh National Sports Centre, Cardiff, Angley School pupil Lewis Gray was unbeaten in both the team event and the singles.

Gray and team mate Reece Tan (Middlesex) first became British Cadet Boy Team Champions, beating Scotland, Guernsey, Wales and Isle of Man all 5-0, and Ireland 4-1, Tan dropping the only set 9-11, 11-13, 11-8, 11-4, 6-11 to Declan O'Brien of Ireland. Although Gray won most of his singles comfortably he was put under a bit of pressure by O'Brien, winning 11-8, 16-14, 5-11, 11-6, and was taken to a deciding game, 11-6, 10-12, 11-5, 10-12, 11-6, by Liam Robilliard of Guernsey.

In the cadet boy's singles, Gray's greatest threat came from his English colleague Tan, who had gained revenge over O'Brien in the quarter-final. Gray won their tough semi-final clash 12-14, 11-9, 11-8, 8-11, 11-6, and then had a comparatively comfortable final victory 11-8, 11-2, 11-3 over Scotland's Scott Barton to be crowned British Champion.

Gray, ranked no.2 cadet in England, commented, "I played well. I was moving quickly to balls wide on my forehand, and able to hard topspin spin-up with both my forehand and backhand to all parts of the table."

Derby 4* Junior Open

Meanwhile, Yolanda King, a pupil of St Bedes School, Hailsham, was experiencing success in the Derby 4 Star Cadet and Junior Open Championships. Seeded no.2 in the cadet girls' singles, King, the England cadet no.3, fought her way through some tough matches when she duly met the top seed and England no.1, Emily Bates, Lincolnshire, in the final. Yolanda started in style, taking the first game 11-9, and leading, with a little luck from nets and edges, 5-1 in the second. Unfortunately she then allowed some crowd bantering to get to her, and lost concentration and both the second and the third games. She regained her focus in the fourth game, but it was not quite enough and she went down 11-9, 7-11, 7-11, 10-12.

However, King, seeded no.3, played even better in the junior (under 18) girls' singles, and after recording an excellent 5-11, 11-9, 12-10, 11-3, result over the no.2 seed Natalie Slater (Staffordshire), who she narrowly lost to a fortnight ago at and the

English National Senior Championships, Yolanda faced Emily Bates, the top seed and England junior no.3, for a second time.

In a fantastic match full of suspense, King, the England junior 10, came back from 2 games to 1 down, to go to a dramatic, nail-biting final game. Towards the end of this game, she finished a tremendous rally with a spectacular running backhand winner which stunned the audience and may have been decisive, for she won the match and the title 9-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-6, 11-8.

King, who was advised in the final by former world no.4 woman Tong Fei Ming (Taiwan), explained: "I was told to push, which I hate doing, until I had a ball which I could topspin strongly. Emily then could not counter-hit strongly and I won a lot of the rallies".

Helshan Weerasinghe, a former member of the Weald Club and a pupil of Judd School, Tonbridge, won the cadet boys' singles, beating Jared Patel (Essex) 11-8, 11-7, 11-9 in the final. In the semi-finals he had put out Ross Wilson from the Howard Club, Gillingham, who had earlier giant killed top seed Ping Ho (Middlesex), the England no.4.

Jack Bennett from Polegate, East Sussex, who attends the South East Regional Performance Centre at Angley School, Cranbrook, also had a good tournament. England ranked no.24 under 13 boy, he had wins over the England nos. 8, 10 and 12. And in the cadet boys' singles he had an excellent opportunity to put out the top seed Ping Ho in 3 or 4 games, before ultimately succumbing 12-10, 10-12, 11-8, 11-13, 4-11.

In the National Cadet League at the Byng Hall Club, Tunbridge Wells, Dan Lawrence won all his 9 singles in helping the Weald Club come league runners-up to Battle 'A'. Aaron Serfaty won 6 out of 9 singles and Jamie Pryor took 5 out of 9 singles. Lawrence finished unbeaten in the whole division, winning overall 36 out of 36. Serfaty ended with an average of 67% (18 wins to 9 losses) and Pryor had a 33% average (12 wins, 24 losses). Oliver Ferris also played for the Weald.

The Weald Club came 5th in the National Junior League. Daniella Gray ended with the highest average (53% from 16 wins to 14 losses), while George Cox had 48% (19 wins, 21 losses) and Joe Watson got 37% (11 wins to 19 losses). Zach Ferris, who only started playing in September, won his first 2 singles for the Weald on Sunday.