

LEWIS GRAY FIGHTS BACK FROM EARLY DISAPPOINTMENT TO FINISH 9TH IN JUNIOR MASTERS

Lewis Gray, the 15 year old Angley School, Cranbrook pupil from Benenden, fought back from early disappointing losses to finish a credible 9th in the prestigious English National Junior (under 18) Masters competition at the Westfield Table Tennis Centre, Wellingborough over the weekend.

Gray, a member of the Weald TT Club based at Angley School, was brimming with confidence at the start of the weekend, having won the National Cadet (under 15) Masters, which is run on the same gruelling round robin format in a 14 player group, the previous weekend. However, in his first matches on Saturday, he met the top 4 highest England ranked junior boys present, and although he put up strong performances, taking a game off Danny Lowe (Derbyshire), the England no.6, and going close with England no.3 Chris Doran (Northamptonshire), who was to win the event, and England no. 4 Matt Ware (Dorset), his confidence took a battering.

Gray, who is the England no.17 junior, then lacked his usual spirit in losing to 2 lower ranked players he might have expected to have beaten, Reece Tan (Essex), and Daniel Besterfield (Middlesex), though the latter match was over 5 games. Fortunately, after narrowly losing the first game against his old rival Ping Ho (Middlesex), Lewis was able to pull himself together for his only victory of the Saturday with a comprehensive 9-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-4 result.

On the Sunday, he was a different player, moving better and hitting stronger, resulting in 3 consecutive wins over tough opponents all ranked higher than him, Sam Walker (Derbyshire), Kim Daybell (Yorkshire), and Emran Hussain (Essex). Although he then lost 3-1 to the also higher ranked Richard Andrews (Berkshire), who was on form and finished 4th overall, Gray then rounded off the day all guns firing with an excellent 11-8, 11-9, 9-11, 11-9 success over the national cadet champion and England junior no.8, Zak Zilesnick (Middlesex). Although his final tally of 5 wins to 7 losses (one player dropped out through injury) was equal to Reece Tan, Gray was placed in 9th place behind Tan, having lost to him.

Gray represents England in the Stiga Cadet 6 (European) Nations Tournament in Koping, near Stockholm, Sweden, this weekend, while his Weald Club mate Yolanda King finishes off her Slovakian tour representing England cadet girls' in the Slovak Junior Open in Bratislava.

Meanwhile, another Weald Club member, Dan Lawrence, who won the under 13 boys' singles and lost in the cadet finals at the recent TTK 1 star tournament in Tooting, London, has made the first step towards possible future national representative honours. Alongside Ross Wilson of the Howard Club, Gillingham, and Helshan Weerasinghe, a pupil of Judd School, Tonbridge, he has been chosen to attend England Cadet Development Squad training at the English Institute of Sport (EIS) on 13th/14th June.