

# Medway Towns Table Tennis League Annual Championships 2010

89 players contested the Medway Towns Table Tennis's League's 2010 Championships over the weekend at the Howard Table Tennis Centre, Rainham. The star of the weekend was veteran Graham French from the Sturdee club, who picked up a total of 6 titles including the prestigious Open Singles title, 34 years after he first won the title in 1976. This was his third success having also won in 1996. Sixth seed French met Sturdee I teammate and fifth seed Richard Carden in an unexpected final after French had put out second seed Chris Martin (Howard) 11-6, 11-8, 8-11, 11-9 and Carden despatched the number one seed Ian Gordon (Howard) 11-7, 2-11, 10-12, 11-7, 11-5 in the semis. Both players had scares on route to the semis with French having to come from 2 legs down in his quarter final clash with third seed Chris Marr (Sturdee) before taking it on deuce in the fifth leg 7-11, 9-11, 12-10, 13-11, 12-10. Carden was also 2 legs down in his first round tussle with Simon Rudland (Howard) before taking it 8-11, 6-11, 15-13, 11-7, 11-9 and was in trouble again in the quarters against another Sturdee teammate, fourth seed Martin Hewett, coming through 8-11, 13-11, 5-11, 11-9, 11-9. French used all his experience to overcome his 20 year old opponent who was making his first appearance in a senior final, and used his customary blocking counter attacking style to overcome the power hitting of the younger man.

On Saturday, French's successes came in the Vets Over 40 doubles, partnering Ian Gordon (Howard) to victory over the Howard pairing of Alan Longhurst and Steve Waud. Gordon later won the Singles title at this level with a straight legs win over defending champion Chris Marr (Sturdee). French defended his Over 50s singles crown by defeating teammate Mike Ling 11-5, 11-5, 11-5 and paired up with Dennis McConkey (Invicta) to take the doubles from the Sturdee combination of Steve Bannister and Ling. On Sunday, apart from the Open Singles, he won the Over 60s Singles where he beat Barry Skates (Sturdee) and again teamed up with McConkey to win the doubles against the Rainham / Sturdee duo of Peter Baker and Skates.

The Open Doubles saw the number one seeds Ian Gordon and Chris Martin defeat the defending champions and number three seeds from Sturdee, Scott Friday and Chris Marr in four legs. Gordon and Martin defeated number four seeds, Sturdee's Carden and Simon Forest in the semis and dropped only one leg in the competition, and that was in the final, whilst Friday and Marr defeated Sturdee club mates and number two seeds French and Martin Hewett at the same stage.

The Ladies events were dominated by defending champion Lesley Waller (Howard) who won the "round robin" singles competition with club mate Jackie Williams runner-up. She paired up with another Howard club mate Lauren Beaumont, to take the doubles title against the Sturdee / Howard pairing of Jill Shipton and Williams. Waller also retained the Mixed Doubles title with partner Ron Osborn by defeating Shipton and Richard Farthing (Howard).

The star of the Junior events was Chatham's 14 year old Shaun Guttridge who lived up to the pressure of being favourite in both the Under 15 Singles where he beat Howard's Austin Edwards and also the Under 18 Singles in which he came back from 2-1 down against Walderslade Viking's George Horne to take it 11-9, 4-11, 5-11, 11-8, 11-5..

Gutridge made it a clean sweep by taking the U15 doubles with Nathaniel West (Howard) against the Howard pair of Austin Edwards and Kieron Kennerley whilst at the U18 level, he paired up with teammate Sean Weddell to get the better of the Vikings duo of Horne and Michael Benson in a tense 5 legs 1-9, 8-11, 13-11 7-11, 11-4. The Under 13 events were dominated by the Kennerley brothers Kieron and Brandon with Kieron claiming the Singles title from Brandon and they then teamed up to take the doubles from brothers Mason and Regan O'Neil. Regan O'Neil had the consolation of winning the Under 11 Singles with Dan Furner runner-up

In the Divisional events, only one top seed secured their title when Chatham's Stuart Fritter took the Division Two title with a 11-7, 11-6, 11-3 success over 16 year old teammate Sean Weddell. First Division favourite Graham Heywood (Howard) lost out in his first game to Rainham's Ron Weaver who, as a result of also knocking out the thirteenth seed Phil Thomas (Howard) from the Open Singles and beating the number two seed Dennis McConkey in the Over 60s, was awarded the giant killer trophy. Barry Skates took the crown from Chatham's Denny Jose whilst in Division Three, Howard's Jamie Diddams took out top seed George Horne (Vikings) and then beat club mate Tom Waud to take the title. Division Four saw Chatham's second seed Roger Chipperfield beat teammate and top seed Stephen Wadey in four legs.

The Consolation Singles for all but the top 16 seeds was won by Brian Lawes (Sturdee) who beat Chris Drury (Cliffe Woods) 6-11, 14-12, 11-8, 11-9.

Martin Harris