

# WARREN SPRING TABLE TENNIS CLUB NEWSLETTER

## *February Edition*

### **Cup Roundup**

The week of 12<sup>th</sup> December saw the semi finals of the various divisional cup competitions. The A team were to face Bedwell A in the Willmott Cup premier event, alongside our C team who faced Settlement Skylarks. The E team were set to play Broadway B in the McClaughlin division one confrontation whilst we had three teams trying to make it an all Warren club final in the Henderson Cup for division three.

Sadly, the week did not get off to a good start as our E team had to concede their match as they could not raise a team. A great shame this far into the competition. On the same evening as this match should have been played, the A team were battling to stay alive against Bedwell A. With only two players (Tom Carr had injured himself the previous week against this same team in the league and Angela Smith was unavailable) this was an almost impossible task especially as we had taken a real drubbing in the league. However, Simon Proffitt had returned from his bout of sickness which saw him miss the previous battle and so confidence within the team was still high. So, we began 3-0 down but Arron Beckett was playing well and soon got the better of Bedwell's Stuart Mylrea -3-1. Next up Simon faced the Bedwell ace defender Steve Dobbins. These two had met many times before mostly in the North Middlesex league and with Simon being extremely good at playing defenders and Steve usually rock solid against loopers a great game was expected. A great game is indeed what unfolded as Simon took the first leg 11-6. Steve came back showing his well known defensive qualities and took the leg 2-11. He just nicked the third 10-12, now was the time for Simon to dig deep which he did taking legs four and five with scores of 13-11, 11-9 and so match score 3-2. Could we level things? To do so Arron had to play the game of his life against the highly ranked and respected Jimmy Walsh. Alas it was not to be, for as well as Arron played Jimmy came through three legs to one. Match score 4-2. This soon became 4-3 as Simon saw off Stuart. Crunch time, could we level things? Arron again played some great stuff against Steve putting in a much better performance than the previous week but still went down 7-11, 14-12, 4-11, 11-6, 11-3. With Bedwell over the finishing line the last game was played for pride as Simon and Jimmy battled it out with Jimmy coming through 8-11, 11-9, 11-9, 8-11, 6-11 in a match full of explosive table tennis. We were out but the lads went home with heads held high.

Meanwhile our C team were battling hard and getting a really good result against the Skylarks coming through by a score of 5-2. Isaac Beever got the team off to a great start with a comfortable three leg win over Jim Felstead. Barry Phillips increased our lead beating Janice Laing in four. Next up Charlie Baines faced Sandra Harper the Skylarks No 1 who was made to work for her win finally getting over the finishing line with scores of 11-8, 9-11, 11-6, 14-12. Further wins for Isaac over Janice and Charlie over Jim meant that we just needed one more for the victory. Barry tried his utmost against Sandra but could not find a way past going down in three. It was therefore left to Charlie to secure the team's place in the final with a nail biting 9-11, 11-6, 7-11, 11-9, 11-8 win over Janice.

Thursday was the evening it was all happening in the Henderson cup with the N team at Royston against Royston F and our K and M teams locked in battle at Wymondley.

Unfortunately for the N team their No 1, Kevin Yao was away in China and with Royston putting together perhaps their strongest side the team knew that getting a winning result would not be easy. The key seemed to be how well could Peter Fabian play on the night and could he nick the games required. The answer was that on this occasion it was not to be. The team did play well but the overall strength of the Royston side showed through with the fast improving Sean Loffman and the vastly experienced Val Parkes telling especially over the youngsters that we had in our team namely Yu Ning Tzeng and Barney Ross-Smith. The plus point to the evening was that all our players managed to beat Royston's Keith Waldock.

Wymondley was the scene of real excitement as there was never more than one game separating the two teams the whole evening. Both showed tremendous team spirit which was a feature of the match throughout. Opening play, Sahib Matharu lost in straight games to Andrew Lee, 1-0 to the M team. Next up, Dante Lacorte showed no quarter against Mike Reading also winning in three, the tie now level. Wins by firstly Tim Huxtable and then Mike Reading saw the sides level again. And so it went on with both teams having a chance to reach the winning post through the evening, most notably the M team as Alan Harding just lost out to Tim 13-11 in the fifth. And so, with the score on 4-4 it was down to Dante and Andrew to see who would make it through to face Royston F in the final. Although Andrew never stopped fighting, it was the experience of Dante that saw him through in straight sets.

### **Cup Finals**

The Associations cup finals were held at the HBS on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February and the club had two teams taking part. In the Willmott Cup for the premier division the C team faced the might of Bedwell A, whilst at the far end of the hall our K team faced Royston F. Amazingly, there was even a core of spectators watching, and who knows it may be TV cameras next.

Although our C team consisting of Isaac Beevor, Charlie Baines and Barry Phillips tried their very hardest, they were no match on the night for the Bedwell trio of Jimmy Walsh, Luke Walsh and Stuart Mylrea. The score of 6-0 did however flatter our opponents somewhat although to be honest their victory was never in doubt. Isaac at one set up was unfortunate to lose the second to Luke 10-12, who knows what might have been had Isaac had gone 2-0 up. He also put together a sterling performance against Jimmy going down in four. Charlie showed flashes of brilliance but his blocking was not quite on song and he consequently struggled to find real consistency. That said, there was not that much between him and the opposition and on another night it could have been very different. Barry tried his hardest and perhaps should have taken Stuart, the contest going to the fifth and final leg. On his way to the table to play Luke he was heard to comment "this will be an exercise in picking the ball up" and whilst not quite true Luke ran out a fairly comfortable winner.

Whilst this match was being played, our K team were involved in a marathon against Royston F. We started badly with Sahib losing to Sean Loffman and Dante missing out to Val Parkes. Tim got us back on track with a win over Carole Norman and then Dante played a blinder to defeat Sean 14-12 in the fifth. The evening continued to be a topsy-turvy affair with neither Sahib nor Tim finding a way to defeat Val. So, with the teams locked together at 4-4 it was certainly a case of "cometh the hour, cometh the man" as Sahib came out to face Carole in the decider. With both players looking for their first win of the evening you knew it was going to be a tense affair. Sahib is always nervous in a competitive game and by this time the butterflies were working overtime. The youngster however

somehow overcame his nerves, listened to coach John, and played controlled table tennis whilst taking his chances when they came, to run out a winner in three straight sets.

This means that once again, the club will appear on the North Herts roll of honour as Henderson cup winners for 2012.

### **Club Tournament**

As many of you will know the tournament arranged for Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February had to be called off owing to the bad weather and consequently a reduction in numbers. Although we did our very best to notify players of the cancellation, a few still slipped through the net and arrived ready to play. So that their journey was not wasted, an impromptu event was held with our Chairman putting up a brand new white (matching the weather outside) Stiga ball as 'The Trophy'. There were certainly no holds barred as six competitors battled it out for the said illustrious trophy. The winner in five close sets was Rob Worrell who defeated a rather unlucky Arthur Hawkins.

The tournament proper has been re-scheduled to take place on **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March** and pleased to say the entry list is filling up. If you have not been contacted by me but would like to enter then please let me know within the next few days.

If the games on the 25<sup>th</sup> in any way match up to the few that were played on that extremely cold day in February, we shall have a great event.

### **League Round-Up**

**Warren Spring C 3**– Isaac Beevor, Charlie Baines, Barry Phillips

**Warren Spring A 7**– Arron Beckett, Simon Proffitt, John McCance

The club's newest member John McCance will not forget his introduction into the North Herts league in a hurry as he had to play fifteen sets of table tennis in this match culminating in an 11/8 defeat against Isaac, an 11/6 defeat against Charlie and an 11/9 win over Barry. Meanwhile, Isaac gained an impressive albeit hard fought win himself over Simon 11/4, 11/7, 10/12, 16/14 whilst Arron played a real captains role in winning a maximum although again this included two five setters' against Isaac and Barry. Every game was close fought and there were seven games overall that went the full distance making for an extremely late 12.15am finish.

### **Player Availability - Season 2012/13**

Now that the league season is entering its final phase it is already time for the club to start considering options for next season. With this in mind, could I ask team captains to have a word with their respective players asking what their likely commitments are expected to be. With the possible return of Gabriella Tankel and Tom Baines, and our desire to have John McCance playing regularly for us, coupled with the steady progress being made by our juniors in the lower divisions the club would appear to be in a very strong position.

## **Diary Dates**

Club Tournament – 25<sup>th</sup> March

Annual Dinner – 28<sup>th</sup> April (*I believe live entertainment will be on offer again*). Ed

Club AGM – 8<sup>th</sup> May

## **Player Profile – John Giles**

As indicated in the last newsletter the profile spot this time was meant to be taken by Angela Smith. However, Angela suffered a bout of ill health just after Christmas and although now fully recovered needs a little more time to put things together. Therefore, John Giles who heads our junior coaching team has stepped forward with an interesting albeit shortened account of his table tennis career to date.

‘I was first introduced to table tennis when working with my Brother-In –Law for the Daily Mirror newspaper where I used to play in the canteen at lunchtimes. I began relatively late in 1969 when I was seventeen years old. (Yes, you guessed it I married very early). I think it fair to say that from early on I was “hooked” and the sport began to form a huge part of my life which it still does to this day. I was fortunate in that I picked things up very quickly and before long was involved in my first final when having swapped jobs I took part in the Post Office Championships and walked away as runner-up. I became interested in coaching and in 1970 obtained my coaching badge where I went through the levels to finish up a level 4.

I played in many of the London leagues, notably, the North Middlesex league, Willesden league, London Business Houses league and the Central London league.

As my standard improved, I and a few close pals in the game began to enter open tournaments across the country. I travelled the length and breadth of the land playing in these tournaments and competed against some of the best home grown players that the country offered at that time namely; Des Douglas, Chester Barnes, Denis Neale, John Hilton, Graham Sandley, Duggie Johnson, Max Crimmins and Mark Mitchell (who now coaches at St Neots). Many of these players became good friends as well as opponents and we continue to meet up for a chat and a beer when our paths cross.

Many of these open events attracted not only England’s finest but Europe’s finest also. Never one to turn down a challenge I repeatedly found myself playing and in most cases being severely humiliated by the great names of European table tennis. Those that I have played and been humiliated by include Stellan Bengtsson (in my opinion the greatest player of his era), Milan Orlovski, Wilfred Lieck, Dragutin Surbeck and Jaques Secretin – whom I briefly modelled my own game on.

At the same time as playing and coaching, I was also getting involved in other aspects to do with sport in London mainly due to the fact that I was involved in bringing table tennis into several youth clubs and Inner London Schools. I became team manager for Islington and Hackney and held that position for twenty years. Whilst in that role I helped organise the London Youth Games. I have coached at the Crown and Manor club in Hackney for many years and now hold the position of

Secretary for that club. If all that was not enough, I used to travel around with my friend of forty years Melvin Wardman (a former No 1 England junior) playing in exhibition games at various holiday camps.

I get asked frequently what have been the main changes that I have seen to the game over the years. I can say that without a doubt the advent of fast and “funny” rubbers has changed the game dramatically and not in my opinion for the best. You no longer get the consistent rallies and attack versus defence games that you used too, this in turn and to my mind have ruined the game as a spectator sport.

My career to date has seen many funny moments, but perhaps the two most funniest took place some years ago and involved the national Chinese team. The team were staying in a hotel close to Russell Square in London and they were due to train at the North Middlesex University. Many of us wanted to get a glimpse of these amazing players in action and so as I was working as a scaffolder at the time I agreed to take a few in my works lorry. The Chinese were incredibly polite and after a while some of them indicated by sign language (English was in short supply) that they would like to go out for a cigarette. This somewhat surprised me, the thought of these top athletes going out for a “fag”. Once outside I was amazed to see them not only bringing their cigarettes from their track suit pockets but also their own small ash trays complete with lids as well. Apparently it was seen as disrespectful to drop butt ends and ash onto the ground and so these ash trays were used throughout the “smoking period”.

When the training session was finished it was found that there had been some mix up over how the team were going to get back to their hotel. Never one to be defeated by a problem I said “don’t worry jump in my lorry”, and there I was delivering the national Chinese table tennis team to their hotel in the back of a lorry.

There are plenty more stories that I could recount most of which could not be printed in a magazine such as this but my time in the game has given me and continues to give me immense pleasure.

No profile would be complete without the legendary “what was the best win of your career piece”. I can honestly say that my best win came about by a sheer fluke. I was playing Max Crimmins – then the current England No 3 – and getting absolutely stuffed when a team mate of mine thought he had spotted a weakness in Max’s game. “Lob him off John, lob him off” came the shout, I did and I won. Needless to say that the next time we played I did not get a look in.

I would like to finish by saying that in my opinion I think that this is a fantastic club and may I wish it every continued success for the future’.

*Thank you for that last piece John, your cheque is in the post. Ed.*

