

# Squash Club Championship 2022 - report

Thank you ... to every Member who participated in the Squash Club Championship and to every Member who attended the finals night dinner and prizegiving on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May.

Squash Club Finals are now back in the usual Club-calendar spot of early May and only five months since the 2021 finals.

The season and finals exceeded expectation with the matches and Chairman's speech living long in the memory for those lucky enough to witness them.

The Finals Night began with a result rather than a match ...

## **Under 19 Junior**

The final between Sophie Evans and Hugo Anderson was sadly a non-event due to an injury sustained by Hugo. We wish Hugo a quick and full recovery but congratulations to Sophie on winning the U19 title, having lost in the 2021 final.

Sophie Evans beat Hugo Anderson w/o

## **O45s Singles**

The over 45s saw a familiar face in the final, Spencer Gordon – 2021 finalist. Perhaps not the familiar finalist most would expect in Duncan Kynoch, having been knocked out earlier in the draw by Chris Dawson. Duncan was resigned to marking duties as newcomer Chris Dawson and Spencer Gordon competed in the final.

Chris, with his hard, left-handed hitting started the first game brightly while Spencer tried to find his range. Chris took the first game but Spencer's plan of hitting low and deep to Chris's backhand seem to pay dividends in the second game as he raced to a 5/0 lead. Although the serve swapped hands on occasions after, it was Chris who would have a plan 'B' and re-took control of the match winning the second game 9/5. Spencer now exhausted put up a brave fight but Chris closed out the third game 9/3 and match 3-0.

Chris Dawson beat Spencer Gordon 3-0. 9/5, 9/5, 9/3.

## **O55's Singles**

A new event for this year's tournament and it would be a final between one of the star Bath Cup Vets players of recent seasons, Cavin O'Driscoll, and a previous Bath Cup Vets stalwart Stuart.

Cavin initially struggled with Stuart's serve, especially to the forehand side and the warm court meant taking the ball in short, usually an advantage at this age (!), was not as beneficial as may had been planned. All three games were played at a great level and wonderful spirit and interestingly in a similar pattern, Cavin had to run and run to earn his points, but he just about managed to pace himself to take a 3-0 win and the first ever Over 55 singles title.

Cavin O'Driscoll beat Stuart Hardy 3-0. 9/4, 9/6, 9/4.

## **Open Singles**

The final was always going to be a high-class affair between two top players ... the challenge was that no-one was sure who would be in the final.

After a successful Bath Cup season the final was played between Ben Coates and Lewis Walters. Ben having beaten Steve Richardson in one semi-final and Lewis beating Jojo Shean in the other. Worth noting Steve, Ben and Jojo did not lose a single of their respective Bath Cup matches this season.

Lewis is renowned for a slow start and the first game followed this pattern, as Ben, who was fully focused raced to a 8/3 lead and then an exchange of world class rallies saw Ben win the first game.

As if someone had flicked a switch the second game was dominated by Lewis leading 9/1 to then take the game 11/2. Lewis did not let up at in the third and the world class squash was matched as the tighter score line suggests as Lewis came from 4/3 down to win 11/5 and take a 2-1 lead in games.

The fourth game began closely, 3/3 then 4/3 Lewis. But as are the fine margins at the top-level Ben dug deep and saw a glimmer of hope at 4/4, kept his cool and applied pressure to take the game 11/4 and force the match into a deciding game.

Lewis was not going to give up easily though. Ben fell behind early on 2/3 but regained his lead with determination and high-class accuracy to open a 6/5 lead. Lewis tried to stay with Ben but from 7/9 down Lewis could not find the points needed and Ben closed out the game 11/7 and with it the match 3-2 to take his second Club Championship Open title. (Having previously won it back in 2018).  
Ben Coates beat Lewis Walters 3-2. 11/5, 2/11, 5/11, 11/4, 11/7.

### **Ladies Singles**

2021 champion, Elspeth Young, made the 2022 final but knew winning this title was going to be difficult. Facing Elspeth in the final was Alison Waters, recently retired from the world squash tour and with a previous world high ranking of 3, would the pressure to claim her first Club Championship get to Alison?! The answer came quiet quickly as Alison opened a 7/0 lead, but Elspeth then relaxed and played a few of her wonderful attacking shots to get herself into the match. This did not deter Alison who took the first game 11/3. The second game Alison showed her class, and why she had just been selected to represent England at the Commonwealth Games in the squash doubles. The third was a near repeat of the second game with Alison controlling the rallies and hitting winners at the right time. Elspeth battled towards the end and from 10/2 managed to get to 10/5 but Alison calmly waited her time to win the game 11/5 and the match 3-0.

Alison Waters beat Elspeth Young 3-0. 11/3, 11/2, 11/5.

### **Handicap Singles**

A match between friends, as Andy Nowell took on Craig de Silva. Craigs handicap giving Andy a 5-point start in the first game could well have given Andy the confidence to start quickly....and that he did. Some frantic rallies with deceptive shots made for great entertainment but it was Andy who raced to a 8/0 lead and then the game 15/5. Craig regrouped for the second game, and it was as close as could be with both players giving their all to retrieve each and every ball. The score line of 15/14 shows how close the game was and it was Craig victorious to level the match 1-1. This second game may have taken its toll on Craigs fitness (nothing to do with 2 hours of Padel during the day!!) and Andy did not let up as he kept his handicap score advantage at 11/6 up and then closed the game 15/8. Craig battled early in the fourth game, but Andy was hitting the ball low and hard and mixed in a few tricky drop shots, out of the reach of Craig, and it was Andy who took the game 15/5 and the match 3-1.

Andy Nowell beat Craig de Silva 3-1. 15/5, 14/15, 15/8, 15/5.

### **Handicap Doubles**

Chris Goodenough and Elspeth Young took on James Rowland Clark and Chris Lipscomb. Both pairs had claimed some notable scalps in the previous round and the close handicap between them made for an interesting battle. Chris and Elspeth started so fast most missed the first game, as they combined hard hitting (Chris) with deft touch (Elspeth) to win the first game 11/3. A team talk for James and Chris L saw a reverse in fortune with lots of head scratching from the spectators as they won the second game 11/3. How could a match be this one side for two different games? The third game noticeably saw both pairs steadier in their play and the error count reduced. A close game right to the end but it was Chris and Elspeth who came out on top 11/9. The fourth again showed how closely matched these two pairs were, not sure what happened in the first two games, and it was only the odd shot that would separate them. Luck favoured Chris and Elspeth at the right times towards the end of the fourth game and they did not give up the opportunity as they won the game 11/8 and match 3-1.

Chris Goodenough and Elspeth Young beat James Rowland Clark and Chris Lipscomb 3-1. 11/3, 3/11, 11/9, 11/8

### **O55's Doubles**

Cavin O'Driscoll and Kevin Daly had experience, not in age years but of partnering each other, against Nick Charteris-Black and Stephen Jones. Stephen, a new Member to the Club, provided Nick with a partner possessing attacking shots and quality. It was a nervy start from all, and a few errors from Nick combined with Cavin and Kevin taking the ball in short to the front corners meant Cavin and Kevin from 3/3 opened a 9/4 lead before taking the first game 11/5. The second game was tough and closely fought with all four players now hitting the ball well. Nick and Stephen managed to get into a 8/6 lead but could not find that next point as Cavin and Kevin kept in the rallies to take the game 11/8. The third saw a quick start by Cavin and Kevin and added to the body blow of losing the second game there was to be no recovery from Nick and Stephen as Cavin and Kevin kept focused to claim the game and match 3-0.

Cavin O'Driscoll and Kevin Daly beat Nick Charteris-Black and Stephen Jones 3-0. 11/5, 11/8, 11/0.

### **O40's Doubles**

A near repeat of the 2021 final but Jo had a change of partner with Spencer Gordon replacing the absent Michael Hill as they took on 2021 winners Toby Marcham and Paul Lindsay.

A case for fewer errors wins you matches in doubles and Jo and Spencer proved this in the first game as they recovered from 1/5 down to gain confidence and take the game 11/9. A similar pattern for the second game as Toby and Paul looked to have found more of a rhythm but at 7/8 down it was Jo and Spencer who reduced their errors and hit a better length to take the game 11/8.

A change of tactics as Toby and Paul swap sides ... this could have been the answer as they raced into a 4/1 lead and seemed a lot more comfortable taking the game 11/4.

The fourth game saw little between the pairs as 3/3 became 6/6 and then 8/7 to Toby and Paul. Jo and Spencer kept to their plan to force the other pair to win rallies. They remained focused and sensing a chance took it, to take the fourth game 11/8 and the match.

Jo Cochrane and Spencer Gordon beat Toby Marcham and Paul Lindsay 3-1. 11/9, 11/8, 4/11, 11/8.

### **Open Doubles**

The final match of the evening did not disappoint. Both singles Open Finalists, Ben Coates, and Lewis Walters, were now paired together as they took on Steve Richardson and Rob Findlay.

Steve and Rob started well to take a slender 7/6 lead, but Ben and Lewis were managing to stay with them and starting to force errors. The high quality was loudly applauded by the spectators each rally as both pairs concentrated on trying to create an opening or hit a winner, not an error! Game ball at 10/9 to Ben and Lewis was saved and then Rob and Steve had their own game ball at 13/12 and took it at the first time of asking much to their delight and relief.

The second game saw Ben and Lewis push up the court and start to attempt more winners. It led to more errors from Steve and Rob and soon the match was level at 1-1.

The third game was a spectacle of amazing reactions, wonderful retrieving, and sublime winners. The fact the game was so close proved it was all four players now on their game. Perhaps the fresher legs of Steve and Rob gave them a slight advantage, but it was most likely their freshness mentally, having not competed in the Open singles final, that gave them an edge and they took the very close third game 12/10.

The fourth game saw Ben and Lewis take a 6/3 lead, but Steve and Rob were still in this. Soon it was 6/6 and a big point at 6/7 looked like it took its toll on Ben. Ben and Lewis fought on but could not stay with Steve and Rob who took the game 11/7 and match 3-1.

Steve Richardson and Rob Findlay beat Ben Coates and Lewis Walters 3-1. 11/9, 6/11, 11/8, 11/7.

### **Best and Fairest**

2021/22 – Tim Butler

Retiring to the Roehampton Room, with Hawaiian-themed menu and shirts on show to match. The Chairman and Captain gave a lovely talk on the success of the Bath Cup and Queen's Cup teams before presentations of trophies to the winners and highly entertaining speech by Squash Chairman Philip Greenhalgh rounded off the night

Kind regards,

**Paul Lindsay**