

Squash Club Championship Finals 2023

Best and Fairest – Winner;

Nick Charteris-Black

A season in which Nick captained and played in the majority of the friendly matches and being a stalwart of the Tuesday Club night doubles. Also ventured on his first squash tour to New York much to the travelling party's delight.



Handicap Doubles – Nigel Clarke and Jojo Shean beat James Rowland Clark and Victoria O'Donnell 3-0. 15/13, 11/5, 11/7. The random draw managed to pair 2019 winners Nigel and Jojo back together. Although their high handicap and tough route to the final made them underdogs in each round they held their nerve beating a very solid pair in James and Vicky in the final.

O55's Doubles – Cavin O'Driscoll and Michael Hill beat Anthony Gammon and John Cumming. 3-0. Sadly, player unavailability meant this match was conceded with Cavin and Michael taking the title.

O40's Doubles – Cavin O'Driscoll and Michael Hill beat Chris Goodenough and Paul Lindsay 3-1. 11/9, 11/8, 9/11, 11/8.

The lack of pre match chat from Michael showed both he and Cavin were focused

and fearful of this final. The close start proved correct but Chris having a tough handicap singles match just before was adjusting to the wider court and relentless power drives hit towards him. Few errors from Michael and Cavin saw them take a very close first game. More of the same in the second with Paul trying to force the pace a little but increasing the error rate. Michaels cross court drives and Cavin's straight drops kept the pressure mainly on Chris, who was working tirelessly, and they won the second game. Another close game saw Paul and Chris make fewer errors and open up a 10/6 lead, Michael and Cavin fought back making Paul and Chris shave to work for every point and wrestle some of the momentum back but Paul and Chris fell over the line 11/9 to take game and the match was now finely balanced. The effort from Chris was now taking its toll as Michael and Cavin executed their strategy perfectly, making Chris work from the majority of the point with the occasional shot to Paul to mix it up. Fighting right to the end Paul and Chris tried to claw back the early lead Michael and Cavin had established but they couldn't get the string of points in a row required and Michael and Cavin claimed their second doubles title of the evening.

Open Doubles – Jojo Shean and Michael Shean beat Peter Marshall and Paul Lindsay 3-1. 9/11, 11/9, 11/5, 11/2. Peter fresh from his Open singles win started in fine form and few errors from the 'slightly older' pairing saw Peter and Paul open a 9/5 lead before closing out the game 11/9. Second game the Shean Bros were now settled and moving the ball around the court with great accuracy. 9/6 down Peter and Paul clawed back to 10/9 but could not get over the line as matched levelled 1 game all. Previous matches for Peter and Paul may have started to take their toll and the barrage of winners from Jojo and Mike saw them take the game 11/5. More errors in the 4th by Paul and some sublime play from the Shean Bros saw them race to a 9/1



lead. Peter and Paul didn't give up but there was no way back, Jojo and Mike deserved Open doubles winners.



Handicap Singles – Andy Levy beat Chris Goodenough 3-1. 15/8, 15/8, 9/15, 15/6. Chris was giving Andy a 3 point lead to start and this was just enough for Andy to play a mix of attacking squash with hard low drives, not allowing Chris to settle. The same pattern in the second game and Andy was playing some good squash and seemed the more confident on court. Chris then started to play slower and more sensible forcing Andy into some rushed errors and opened up a sizeable early lead and was able to close out the third game 15/9. It may have taken its toll on Chris, as well as the previous days golf tour, Andy reverted back to hitting some powerful drives and boast not allowing Chris to play and won the game and match.

O55 Singles – Michael Hill beat Cavin O'Driscoll. 3-2. 1/9, 9/6, 9/0, 0/9, 9/3. Michael and Cavin have played a few thousand times before ... and now near weekly battle of the Elite Vets squash Sunday training camp they both knew the match would be close! They would not have predicted the bizarre roller coaster of shot making, winners and tins that was to ensue. Started with Cavin just in majestic form ... he just couldn't miss and game one was over in about three mins as he stormed it 9/1 ... Not the usual pattern of their matches and Michael shaking his head in disbelief. Game two started the same way ... two minutes and Cavin was 6/1 up, this could be over within ten minutes! Then the old steam train started to chug and Michael put the hard work in, getting to 6/3, then 6/6...then 9/6. We now had a match. Michael was then in full flow, self-proclaiming he was Jahangir in his pomp ... and the score justified this, a crushing 9/0 third game. Easy for Cavin to be deflated trying to understand what had just happened but the Welsh wizard regrouped and his magic

wand was out in full force dominating the fourth 9/0. More chance of predicting lottery winning numbers than the game scores in this match.

Into the fifth ... by then the crowd and players had completely no idea what was to come next but Michael hit a couple of exquisitely framed, top spin back of the court drop shot nicks to sneak the fifth 9/3 and match 3-2.

O45 Singles – Chris Dawson beat Duncan Kynoch 10/8, 9/3, 9/7.

Last year's first round match up was amended for 2023 with a fair reflection of seedings and saw reigning champion, Chris Dawson, take on previous multiple O45 champion, Duncan Kynoch. Duncan, with a year's more 'experience' on how to challenge Chris got off to a good start with trade-mark boasts and drop shots working well. Chris perhaps had not been expecting the fight and shot quality to start from the off and was forced to work hard for every point. The look on both players faces after the first game showed this was a classic as Chris snuck it 10/8. Perhaps boasted by the first game win Chris started to stamp his authority with his low hard drives and now getting to more of Duncan's shots. A 9/3 game and 2-0 lead put Chris in the driving seat. The third game was more like the first, Duncan fighting hard for every point and using his game plan to make sure Chris did not race away with a string of points. It was close all the way but Chris managed to just keep his lead and close out a very hard fought 9/7 game and match 3-0.



Junior Open – Sophie Evans beat Finn Vowles 3-0. 11/7, 11/4, 11/7.

Sophie was back to defend her title while Finn was experiencing his first Club Junior Open Final. Finn was slower to settle with a few uncharacteristic errors gifting Sophie an early lead. Slowly Finn started to find his length increasing the pressure on Sophie and allowing him to use his good drop shot to his advantage. Sophie was soon to realise this and while Finn had worked his way back to 10/7 Sophie remain unfazed and kept

her tight line and length winning 11/7. Finn had settled by now but Sophie had settled and also was now finding the corners of the court with great accuracy not letting Finn into the rallies. A quick game saw Sophie go 2-0 up. The third was a great battle with the crowd entertained by Sophies shot selectin and Finns movement. A close game saw the players exchange points but as in the first Sophie remained calm and closed out the game and match 11/7 to retain her Junior Open title.



Ladies Singles – Sophie Evans beat Victoria O'Donnell 3-0.

A first Ladies final for Sophie while Victoria has been a previous multiple winner of the Ladies Singles title. Both had played a previous match but this did not stop the determination of either. The occasion did not seem to fluster Sophie, fresh from her U19 win, and Sophie produced consistent quality drives with a mix of boast that just evaded Vicky. Vicky usually can rely on her effective drops but they were not working on this occasion and Sophie produced a composed and efficient win in three games.

Open Singles – Peter Marshall beat Lewis Walters 3-2. 11/6, 6/11, 6/11, 11/5, 11/6. Would it be third time lucky for Lewis, having lost in the two previous years finals against Ben Coates and Steve Richardson, or first time for Peter?

The crowd were split 50/50 on who would win and the match was just as close. A fast start from Peter saw him take the first game with some wondering if four games in four days was just too much for Lewis, but Lewis is a notorious slow starter. Second game Lewis was now in a rhythm hitting some lovely shots. Match back level at 1-1.

The third had seen a shift in momentum with a close start, 6/5 for Lewis as he then extended the lead to win 11/6, 2-1 to Lewis. Peter, former world Number Two, was never going to give up and took advantage of an early lead in the fourth to go 6/3 up and then 9/5, before taking the game 11/5

and the match was into a deciding fifth game. The crowd were in awe of the standard and squash on show.



As had been the pattern of the match 1/1, 2/2, 4/4, there was nearly nothing to separate these two players. Peter edged in front at 7/5 and was giving everything to get over the line. 10/6 and at the first time of asking Peter won the game and match. A true exhibition of squash and gladiatorial battle with rackets. Shame someone has to lose and I'm sure Lewis will be training to get the elusive Open win. Congratulations to Peter.

Following the matches the players and spectators made their way to dinner with a royal themed menu to acknowledged the King's Coronation the same weekend. A lovely introduction from Squash Chairman, Hugh Thorneycroft, highlighting ex Squash Chairman, Philip Greenhalgh, attending the dinner. Great to see Philip back among the squash events as he continues his recovery from a nasty accident. A season report and winners were duly celebrated and the food remarked of notable quality.

An evening fit for a King and Queen.

