

## Billy Ross Skinner Tournament held at Hatfield 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> February 2022



Hatfield House Tennis Club once again hosted the Billy Ross Skinner Invitational Mixed Doubles tournament sponsored by The Jesters Club over the weekend of 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> February and as always it produced some excellent tennis with long and exciting rallies and tight, hard fought matches!

The event is an invitational event usually for the best 16 ladies available, this year limited to 12 by availability, who are

paired up with men of a suitable standard to give each pair an even chance of winning the title and as ever that was very much the case.

The group stage started on the Friday with Vix Harvey and her partner Jack Josephs, a successful addition to the game via the IIP training scheme, winning all their matches to progress relatively comfortably to the knock-out stage on Sunday, where they were joined by Sue Haswell & Jim Foxall, as well as Katie Leppard & Steve Brewerton as lucky losers.

Unfortunately the morning group on Saturday got off to a bad start when one pair sadly had to drop out due to Covid but it maybe saved them a difficult time as the 2 pairs who progressed through from the group would go on to contest the final just over 24 hours later with Minty Oldham and her partner Paul Bollerman just overcoming Izzy Hunt & Chris Lintott 4/6 6/5 6/5 to take top spot in the group and set them up for a good weekend.

The final group was another very closely fought group with Georgie Willis & Joe Thompson winning 3 out of 3 to top the group, Sophie Dannreuther & Chris Handley finishing as runners-up and Clare Bucknell & Nick Brodie sneaking through to the last available Quarter-Final place as lucky losers!

The pick of the Quarter-Finals showed just how valuable the lucky loser spots were though, with both managing to progress through to the Semi-Finals against previous group winners, as firstly Bucknell & Brodie pulled off a great result beating Harvey & Josephs 3/6 6/4 6/4 before Leppard & Brewerton won an equally tight battle 6/5 6/5 against Willis & Thompson.

The Semi-Finals were contrasting matches with Bucknell & Brodie putting up a great fight against Hunt & Lintott, narrowly going down 6/1 1/6 6/3 while unfortunately Leppard & Brewerton were slightly outgunned against the imperious pair of Oldham & Bollerman losing 6/2 6/1. Oldham and Bollerman by this stage had only dropped 7 games in total on the Sunday and started as favourites despite it being a rematch of their very tight group decider.

As you always hope with this kind of event, the final turned out to be the match of the tournament as both pairs played their best tennis in an absolute classic of a doubles match! The rallies went on and on with some exceptional play and particularly volleying from all 4 players, as the match swung one way and then the other. Oldham & Bollerman kept up the strong form they showed earlier in

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the day to take the 1st set 6/3 but Hunt & Lintott managed to take their game to an even higher level and they responded by taking the 2nd set 6/2 to force the match in to a deciding set starting 3/3. The 2 pairs shared the first 2 games to make it 4/4 before Oldham & Bollerman finally managed to close it out 6/4 for a very well deserved win and to claim the title!

Huge thanks to Steve Brewerton for all his organisation of the event, finding the players and pairing them up which is a very tough job and the closeness of pretty much all the matches shows again why this tournament works so well and also to Sarah Sullivan and Liz Fisher who did an amazing job as always with the food over all 3 days, ably assisted by Jill Akers on the Sunday and thanks as always to the Pros for their marking throughout the event.

