

British Ladies Handicap Tournaments held at Prested November 4th-6th 2022

Winners:

Div 1 Singles Laura Neill

Div 2 Singles Emilia Pitts

Div 1 Doubles Georgie Willis and Izzy Marshall

Div 2 Doubles Saffron Enticknap and Felicity Ridall Bell

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What a terrific turnout – with handicaps ranging from 34 to 85 and ages from 15 to 70+. It was fabulous to welcome so many new faces, especially the enthusiastic schoolgirls, along with a good turnout from France and plenty of the usual ladies who return year after year. It was great to see Sheilagh Owens who came to watch and still plans to be back on court in the future when her knees are better!



With such a large entry, tennis went on late on Friday and non-stop all day Saturday to complete all matches of the 10 boxes in the round robin section, before the Saturday evening dinner (well done markers, they didn't even take a break all day).

In the Div 1 Singles Boxes the Oxford ladies only lost one match between them. Newcomer Rosie Monk achieved a clean sweep and other notable stars were Kate Evers and Ulla Petti. In the Div 2 singles boxes Megan Hawkey, on her home court, didn't lose a match. The young newcomers Felicity, Saffron and Emilia demonstrated some outstanding play, quickly getting used to the court and they seemed at ease in their first large tournament.

On Sunday it was time to progress to the knock-out stages. These matches were dominated by the newcomers and younger players, leaving most of those who have competed regularly over the years, to spectate! The newcomers were by now very comfortable on the stripey Prested court.

The Singles Semi Finals:

In the first of the Div 1 semi finals Izzy Marshall raced to a 4/0 lead, but then Kate Evers managed to get more time at the service end and clawed her way back to 4/3. Izzy then stepped up a gear and took the match 6/3. In the second Div 1 semi it was an amazing Oxford battle, with long rests and both players chasing down everything at such speed. Mary Strevens kept up the pressure and was ahead 5/1, but then Laura Neill made her comeback, using the tambour and cross court shots to good effect, coming out the winner 6/5.

The Div 2 semi finals were both tremendous matches. In the first, both girls played excellent tennis. Saffron went 5/3 up, but Emilia was then relentless, fighting back all the way to a nail biting 5/5 40 all and winning the match. In the other match it was experience winning out over youth for a change, with Peta Louise fighting hard to win through 6/5 against Felicity.

The Singles Finals:

Div 1 – Izzy Marshall owe 30 v Laura Neill rec 15 – A great final with both players running down everything and retrieving well, long rests, gasps from spectators as shots thought to be winners came rocketing back over the net! Izzy was facing a huge handicap difference and kept on with her grilles, tambours and volleys, but Laura upped her game, held her nerve, lay and beat some great chases and came out as Singles Champion 6/2.



Div 2 – Emilia Pitts Rec ½ 15 v Peta Louise Jeffery owe ½ 15 – Having had a long hard fought semi-final Peta Louise found herself back on court against another talented youngster. Emilia started strongly and despite Peta Louise playing good shots to the corners, Emilia dominated the service end delivering a handful of aces in the 4th and 5th games. Youth Triumphed over experience and Peta Louise was unable to stop Emilia’s progress and Emilia went on to win 6/1.



The Doubles:

In the first Div 1 semi finals, the newcomers Trudi Machin delivered many tricky serves and Rosie Monk played strongly, winning 6/2 against Sarah Sullivan and Gabrielle Smart Fourquet. The next match was an Oxford battle with Mary Strevens and Laura Neill playing out of their skins. Georgie Willis and Izzy Marshall kept their focus and climbed mountainous handicap to win 6/3 in a match of great tennis full of long, hard hitting rests.

In the Div 2 semis Megan Hawkey served exceptionally and delivered tight cross court shots, whilst partner Jane Taylor played good returns down the line. This left opponents Peta Louise and Anna Dalton unable to demonstrate their strengths and Megan and Jane won 6/0. In the second Div 2 semi the ‘young’ pair Sarah Lambie and Katy Doy were blindsided by ‘even younger’ Saffron and Felicity, who were returning everything with few mistakes, leading to a victory of 6/2 for Saffron and Felicity.

Div 1 Doubles Final – Georgie Willis & Izzy Marshall owe 15 v Trudi Machin & Rosie Monk rec 30 – With a large handicap difference Georgie and Izzy could not afford to make mistakes and soon found themselves 2/0 down. However this turned into a high class match full of hard hit volleys, cunning ground strokes and tricky serves and the match was soon neck and neck at 3/3. The match continued with long rests and excellent play by all four players. The accuracy and speed around the court of Georgie and Izzy and Georgie’s wealth of experience paid off and they came out victors 6/4.



Div 2 Doubles Final – Megan & Jane owe 15 v Saffron & Felicity love – Megan and Jane started strongly with good serves and using the side walls, taking them to a 3/1 lead, however Saffron and Felicity fought back to 4/4 with the spectators on the edge of their seats. The younger players kept their heads and patiently returned everything, leaving their opponents to make some mistakes, Saffron and Felicity won through 6/4.

What a fabulous weekend with 89 matches over two and a half days at Prested, where we were well catered for, with a lovely sociable dinner in the Hall on Saturday evening and by Bistro staff throughout the weekend.

The whole event would not have been possible without the amazing ‘draw mega spreadsheet’ produced by Ian Hawkey, the hours of marking by the Professionals, Mark Hobbs and Ged Parsons, the advance planning and organisation by Kate Evers and Candida Nicholls and the Prested Members who generously gave up their courts for the whole weekend.

A Huge thank you to our sponsors: Ellisons Solicitors, Fenwick, Bluebird Care and Pol Roger.

Candida Nicholls and Lucy Hutchinson