

## LRTA Under 21 HANDICAP SINGLES TOURNAMENT On 19th and 20th November 2022 played at Radley College



This year, with 14 entries for the tournament, we decided to try a different format. Placing players into groups of similar handicaps and allowing the winner of the group to then go forward to play in the next group and so on.

The first match on court saw Daisy Clifford (Oratory) v Isabella Wylie (Queens) who became one of the stars of the tournament. With only 2 points handicap difference, this was a close encounter and Daisy much improved from last year, played really well to only lose 9- 7. Daisy then played Charlotte Davies (Wellington). Here Charlotte's weight of shot and strong serve was too much for Daisy with Charlotte winning 9 – 3. The winner of the next match, Charlotte v Isabella would go up into the group above. Charlotte was giving Isabella 13 points and whilst Charlotte fought hard to climb back onto level terms several times, Isabella was too consistent and won the set 9 – 3.

In this next large group of 5 players, Saffron Enticknap, Olivia Holroyd, Lila Hue-Williams (all Wellington) and Cordelia Lamming (Queens); these 4 were all within 5 points handicap standard, so, how would they cope when playing Isabella and giving her 20 points? Saffron, Olivia and Lila all showed what terrific athletes they are and really attacked the ball well, but it often came at the expense of hitting the ball onto the penthouse and down the middle of the court rather than placing the ball steadily towards the corners. Lila produced some good serves in her matches, and could hit some tidy cross court backhands, Olivia picked up some difficult balls at the back of the court and they all lost to consistent Isabella. Thus, Isabella won this group as well. We had a drop out from Sunday morning's play which allowed Cordelia to go through as group runner-up. Both Isabella and Cordelia were improving all the time and so on the previous day's strong performance, it was decided to cut Isabella's handicap by 6 points. In the first match, Cordelia v Darcy Blaber (RTC), Cordelia had the previous day's play advantage and had got the feel of the court and whilst Darcy hit some lovely backhands both cross court and down the line,





Cordelia won 6–1. Marina Hammond (Wellington) then played Isabella. Marina tried varying her serve and it did confuse Isabella giving Marina several points but giving 16 points is a hard task and Isabella won 6–1. Marina stayed on court to play Darcy. In this match some great retrieving rests were played out and Darcy took a 5–2 lead. Marina fought hard to get back to 4–5 helped by some panicky shots from Darcy, especially volleys. However, Darcy calmed down and started hitting the ball accurately to the corners again and take the set 6-4. Darcy and Cordelia both played Isabella next giving her 18 and 10 points respectively. Both girls played patiently to play the balls into the corners and Darcie mixing up her serve, to win their matches 6–1. Cordelia was on a roll by then and serving well won the final group match v Marina 6–1 and to go through as group winner.

Our final group comprised of Olivia Boulton (Seacourt), Clemmie Batstone (Wellington), Lydia Compton–Burnett (Wellington) and Cordelia. First on court were Olivia giving 12 points to Clemmie. This was a very close encounter going 1-1, 2–2, 3–3 and 4–4 with Clemmie retrieving superbly some of Olivia’s great drives but eventually Olivia’s sidewall serves won the set 6-4. Cordelia then played Lydia. Cordelia had the advantage of receiving 12 points and was already very used to the court. Poor Lydia couldn’t get going, made lots of mistakes and lost 6-0. Lydia stayed on court to play Olivia. This was an excellent match with lots of 40 all’s. Lydia managed to shut out her previous match and played beautifully, showing great speed about the court to reach 4–4. At this point Olivia hit 4 almost nick serves to quickly take the next game and hit some accurate length drives to take the set 6-4. It was then 13 yrs old Clemmie’s turn to play against the 19-year-old, ever improving Cordelia **and** to give Cordelia 8 points!!! With Cordelia constantly hitting super length serves, Clemmie stood little chance and lost 6–0. Our last but one group game was Cordelia v Olivia. Olivia was giving Cordelia 20 points. What a lovely game this turned out to be. Many times Olivia pulled back from Owe 30–rec 30 to 40 all, yet be denied the last point in the game. Both players served really well, just occasionally Olivia started over hitting and this allowed Cordelia, with her long reach, back into the rally and eventually Cordelia winning 6–3. In our final group game, Clemmie v Lydia, Lydia returned serve well and held on to the serving end to win the match 6–2.



So, to the Final, Olivia v Cordelia, playing one set to 8. They had played each other in the group matches but what did they learn from that encounter? Olivia served first and IMMEDIATELY played a drag serve into the winning gallery, impressive!. She certainly wasn’t going to give in to a 20-point difference. Some super rests were played with Cordelia making a few unforced errors and not managing to hit such a good length on her serve. Olivia was playing immaculately, serving tightly, hitting steadily into the corners and not over-hitting the ball and managing to reach a 5–2 lead. Olivia had a point at 40–40 for a 6–2 lead but the ball came off the penthouse kicking sideways and backwards making it

difficult for Olivia to hit it over the net. Cordelia had been looking tired, after all, it was her 13<sup>th</sup> set in 26 hours! She was back in the game. Cordelia stopped hitting so many balls onto the penthouse and her serve became more accurate prompting Olivia to start over-hitting, it was soon 5-5. In the next



game, there were many corner to corner rallies, with great retrieving by both players; Olivia clawed back from owe 30 rec 30 to reach 30 – 40 down, only for Cordelia to hit a terrific shot into the dedans. Leading 7–5, Cordelia had 4 match points, Olivia wasn't giving in and got back to 40–40 when Cordelia struck a beautiful return of serve to win the point and the title. It was a super final and an even better quality match than their group match.

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*Report by Jill Newby*