



Report

Robert Toth claimed the top prize at the 1st Edinburgh Banded event of the 2017-18 season. In all 73 players took part, with 286 matches played, the biggest Edinburgh Banded to date! Also, an interesting note was every player got 7 or 8 matches and only 2 out of the 73 players at the event didn't win a match (3%). Certainly different to a traditional tournament format where about a third to half of players will leave without a win and there is a large range in the number of matches played. A big thanks to everyone who umpired towards the end of the day, and in particular to our umpire of the day John Yau, who helped his group run smoothly and was an asset to top table.

All the bands were marked by a number of very close matches: a characteristic of this style of tournament. Probably the closest match of the day was Charlie McGowan's victory over Elena Genova in Band 8: 19-17 in the 5th! Due to this, play went on until after 5:30pm, having begun at 10am sharp. A long day of matches - especially for some of the more mature players!

The closeness of Band 1 was evident when Toth - the number two seed - had to battle back from 4-6 in the 5th to beat the number 9 seed Greig McDonell (4, -10, 5, -5, 7). McDonell (armed with a new bat!) had a good day, including a comfortable 3-0 win over Penicuik club mate Colin Green. Toth clinched victory via a good comeback win vs fellow Dundee based John Hannah in what was effectively a final. Trailing 1-2, the Slovak slowly took control of the longer rallies. Hannah made a valiant comeback in the deciding set (from 4-8 down to 9-10), until Toth took his 3rd match point albeit via a slightly fortunate net cord. He put the win down to his decision to play within himself and resist the temptation to go for winners. He was happy to have won the tournament having felt a little bit underprepared having not practiced much over the summer and under-performed in the recent North of Scotland Open.

Toth's only loss came against Charlie Ellis in another lengthy 5 - setter. Ellis himself had an opportunity to top Band 1, but lost out to John Hannah in a tight match: Hannah scoring with some big forehands against his Murrayfield clubmate at the key moments (-9, 10, -14, 4, 7). As a consequence Hannah was runner-up and Ellis 3rd. Though he was slightly frustrated to have missed out by such a small margin, Hannah was generally satisfied by his overall performance. Hannah's other loss was to a pumped-up Andy Grant. As Hannah generously admitted, Grant played 'brilliantly' in the match, with his angled flat hits very much to the fore. Grant's exuberance did however earn him and upbraiding from the top table. Tam Lawlor's determined defensive play helped him earn fourth place in his first Edinburgh Banded.

In Band 2, Rafał Wilowski was unbeaten with another tremendous performance at an ELTTL event. His hardest match was, as Rafał himself said, against Callum Riddoch of Dundee, with his clever mix of defence and attack. Peter Aird came runner-up, now happy with his equipment setup and having plenty of 121s through the summer he performed well to take 2nd place with only a loss to Rafał.

Band 3 was won by bottom seed Gautam Kakar from Glasgow South, who always seems to do well at banded events and must have improved significantly over the summer! Alexander Asyunkin won his first ever trophy in 13 years of table tennis with a strong runner-up performance, certainly helped by his change of pimples and improved chopping technique from his summer training camp in Ukraine.

Bands 4 to 8 trophies were all won by ever-improving younger players! Band 4 was won by Asa Routledge from Stirlingshire, with an impressive 8-0 performance.

Band 5 saw bottom seed Jamie Sloan shock the group by winning on a three-way countback. This was especially impressive considering his last Banded event where he was seeded in the same position but came dead last! For this notable comeback, we award Jamie with the player of the day award! Runner-up was Tony Nelson from Ayrshire, and third place on countback was Micheal Zhang. Band 6 saw Blair Spinks winning with Chris Mexson runner-up. Band 7 was won by David Hay and Louis McLeod runner-up.

Band 8 was a hotly contested event, with 10 players split into two groups of 5. The top 3 from each group all went through to the next stage (Group of 6) with results counting from the previous stage. Andrew Morrison won the event on head-to-head countback, with Haydn Jackson coming runner-up.

Thanks to all for coming, next Banded Series event is on the 5th of November, you can enter here -
<http://www.edinburghtabletennis.com/edinburgh-banded-series.html>

