

## **Sunday 29th April 2012**

Day 2 of the National Cup Finals promised yet another enthralling day of entertainment, with more noise and drama to add to the excitement of the previous day. With the Senior Men's and Women's Champions crowned, it was the turn of the junior finalists to step up to the mark.

### **Under 16 Girls Final Tameside vs. Redhill Stourbridge**

Tameside took an early lead at 4-3 and pushed on to make it 8-4 as the set headed into its first technical time out. Amelia Stamp for Tameside got play started again as three consecutive points followed. Tameside continued to pull away, stretching their lead even further to reach 19-7 as a time out was called. The set became a lost cause for Redhill, who were slow to start as Tameside kept up the pressure and ran away with the opening set 25-9.

The start of the second set was much closer than the first, with Redhill knowing they couldn't afford to fall so far behind again. It was point for point all the way to the first time out, with Tameside a nose in front 8-7. Redhill came out sharper at the restart, as they pounced on a few unforced errors from Tameside to take the lead at 11-10, however it didn't take long for Tameside to wrestle back the initiative and regain the lead with some well placed hitting by Tameside's Molly Van Essen proved too good for Redhill's defence 13-12. Tameside maintained their one point lead through to the second time out. For the first time in the set, Tameside opened up a four point lead with some excellent attacking play by Michaela O'Toole 19-15. Redhill couldn't find a way to string a run of points together as Tameside secure their first match point. They only need the one as they close out the second set 25-18.

It was now or never for Redhill at the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> set. Tameside took an early lead at 6-3, however Redhill were beginning to show their battling qualities, bringing the scores closer at 7-6. Tameside led 8-6 at the timeout, as Redhill Coach Bertrand Olie was desperately searching for a moment of inspiration to kick start a comeback. Nothing seemed to be working though, as Tameside were relentless in attack, some great hitting by Tameside's Georgie Yellowley, quickly moves the score onto 15-10. A five point lead turned into six, as Tameside moved ever closer to taking the decisive 3<sup>rd</sup> set. Redhill began to fight back, showing signs of the form that got them to the final. Tameside resisted though, and only needed 4 more points to win the championship. The nerves started to kick in however, as Redhill managed to bring the score back to 23-18, halving the gap that Tameside had built. Another 4 points for Redhill made it 24-22, however it was too little too late, as Tameside became U16 National Champions, winning the set 25-22.

### **Under 16 Boys Final Nottingham Rockets vs. Boswells**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> final of the day was always going to be one of the noisiest, as Boswells had their army of travelling fans as well as their U18 team to cheer them on, while Nottingham Rockets had brought down a strong contingent of parents and supporters.

Ben Tomlinson of Nottingham Rockets got the final underway. Boswells hit the ground running, and caught Rockets slightly off guard as they raced to a 6-3 lead. A big spike from Ieuan Lamb kept Rockets close, as Boswells led 8-7 at the first time out. A few more points went Boswells' way at the restart, causing Rockets coach Paul Lamb to call another time out to stem the flow of points. The gap was closed slightly, as Boswells led 17-14, however they stepped up the pace and opened up a 20-15 lead with some string hitting by Boswells Marlon King. Rockets struggled to find a way back, as Boswells took the first set 25-18.

Rockets started the better in the 2<sup>nd</sup> set, a huge kill block by Rocket's Alex Hutchinson seemed to energise his team who took an early 5-2 lead. Some great blocking from Boswells turns the set around, as 4 straight points made it 6-5. Boswells once again led 8-7 at the first time out. Rockets couldn't seem to find a way through the Boswells defence, as a 5 point lead is soon opened up at 13-8. The points were shared back and forth through to the second time out at

16-11. All of Rockets' efforts seemed to be in vain, as Boswells were just too strong in defence and attack. A Breathtaking rally saw the ball go cleanly through the roof structure & recovered by Rockets but Boswells Joe Houlihan equal to it makes a fantastic recovery close to the hoardings. The score moved to 21-15 as both teams traded some quick points, but it was once again Boswells who closed out the set to move into a 2-0 lead.

Rockets once again had a good start in the 3<sup>rd</sup> set, staying close to Boswells with some strong serving by their Captain Ieuan Lamb. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 3 sets, it was 8-7 to Boswells at the time out. Rockets just needed to find a way to maintain their early set form and stay close enough to capitalise on any unforced errors. Rockets took the lead at 12-11, however Boswells crept back in front at 13-12. Robert Poole showed some great power hitting at the front for Boswells, increasing their lead to 2 points at 15-13. Just as Boswells looked to be taking control of the 3<sup>rd</sup> set, Ieuan Lamb showed he had other ideas, dictating play from the front of the court and keeping the Rockets boys in with a chance of taking the 3<sup>rd</sup> set. At 19-17 to Boswells, it looked as though the set could still go either way, however Boswells once again scored a run of points and closed out the set 25-18. Congratulations must go to Boswells for retaining their U16 National Champions title.

### **Under 18 Women Newcastle Staffs vs. Ashcombe VC**

Newcastle Staffs recovered from an early 2 point deficit to lead 5-3 over rivals Ashcombe. Some superb spiking from Isi Liebchen brings the scores level at 6-6, however it was Newcastle who led 8-7 at the first time out. A 4 point lead soon developed for Staffs at 12-8, however Ashcombe fought back once again to level at 13 all. A big hit from Paige Nelmes takes the score to 16 all. Newcastle then put together a run of 9 straight points to win the first set 25-16.

There must have been an inspiring team talk given by former international player Freda Bussey, as Ashcombe flew out of the block to race into a 5-0 lead at the start of the second set. Sensing the set may run away from them, Newcastle coach Ant Viggars called a time out to regroup. Newcastle begin to register some points, however at 9-4 down, they still had 5 points to try and claw back. Unforced errors were creeping in as Ashcombe began to pull away. At 21-10, the set looked to belong to Ashcombe. A good block from Jodie Amor made it 22-10. Ashcombe reach set point with a big point cushion, however the pressure began to show as Newcastle started to reel of a run of points. Ashcombe finally got the point they needed and levelled the match at 1 set apiece.

There was no way to predict which way this match was going, as it was now Newcastle showing their qualities as they took a 7-3 lead. This soon turned into a 12-3 lead. Ashcombe began to get into the rallies, picking points off the lead here and there, reducing the lead to 6 points at 19-13. It wasn't enough though as Newcastle gained 7 match points, taking their first to make it 2-1.

A cagey start to the 4<sup>th</sup> set demonstrated that the match was still in the balance, with both teams trying to play it safe and not give away any cheap points. Ashcombe led 8-7 at the time out, but managed to win 7 straight points after the restart, opening up an 8 point lead. This was reduced to 5 points at 20-15, but the consistency from Newcastle's 3<sup>rd</sup> set had disappeared, as they began to rely on mistakes rather than winners to gain points. Ashcombe took the match to a decider, winning the 4<sup>th</sup> set 25-20.

With the 5<sup>th</sup> set only being played to 15, both teams knew a good start was crucial. It was anybody's guess as to who would walk away with the title. An early lead of 4-1 to Newcastle was wiped out by the first technical time out. Ashcombe were the first to reach match point at 14-13, and converted it from a failed block by Newcastle Staffs. Congratulations to both teams on an unbelievable final.

### **Under 18 Men Newcastle Staffs vs. Boswells**

The last game of the weekend, at least on paper, was due to be one of the closest. Newcastle Staffs took on The Boswells School in the Under 18 Men's Final. Staffs got an early 4-1 lead, and maintained their high energy start to lead 8-4 at the first time out. Boswells couldn't seem to close in on the lead, as Staffs seemed to have all the answers at 13-8 up. Unforced errors by Boswells added to Newcastle's score and took both teams in to a technical time out. Newcastle added to the lead, piling more pressure on the Boswells defence. Approaching the final moments of the first set, Newcastle lead 21- 14. Boswells couldn't find a way back, as first blood went to Newcastle 25-15.

Jordan Adelburgh of Newcastle Staffs got the 2<sup>nd</sup> set underway. Staffs held the lead for the majority of the opening exchanges, but it was Boswells who led 8-7 at the first time out. There was nothing to separate the teams, as Boswells were now holding their own against the ferocious attack from Staffs big hitter Jermaine Miles. A time out is called with the teams locked at 21 all. This seemed to affect the concentration of the Staffs players, as Boswells took the next 4 points to level the match.

Staffs were back on their game in the 3<sup>rd</sup> set, opening up a 4-1 advantage which had turned into a 4 point lead at the first time out. Unforced errors and a lack of communication let Boswells back into set, as they took the lead for the first time at the second time out, 16-15. Boswells coach Darren Lewis was becoming more and more vocal on the sidelines, helping his players dictate the pace of the game. Staffs could only manage a further 3 points before Boswells took a 2-1 match lead.

Set 4- a win for Boswells would give them a win to match their U16 counterparts, while a win for Staffs would keep their hopes alive and take the match to a 5<sup>th</sup> set decider. Much like the previous set, both teams refused to give an early advantage away. Boswells led 8-6 at the first time out, as the 2 point gap was kept in place until Boswells broke the deadlock to go 19-16 in front. At 24-21, Boswells thought they'd done it but some great recovery defence from Staffs made it 24-22. The 5<sup>th</sup> set wasn't to be, as Boswells sent their army of fans into applause, as they sealed the set and with it, the U18 National Championship, 25-22