

CLUB FINALS DAY

The day started with the usual panic, what's the weather going to do? Have we got enough food? Will anybody come – apart from the finalists that is? Panic over, the weather was lovely, Sue Pandey and Mark Balaam made sure the food and BBQ was ready to go and yes, much to Tim's delight, a steady stream of players, armed with their weapon of choice, streamed to the registration desk ready to do battle in the "Fun" American Tournament.



Once the draw to randomly select partners had taken place, thanks to Tim's juggling skills, all the courts were kept in continual use, with enough time in between matches for players to grab some delicious food from Mark B's BBQ stand. With all the scores tallied up, and the exquisite and highly desirable prizes taken out the vault, Caroline Chipper and



Chris Moore received their tube of tennis balls from Chairman Tim, who should take a big bow for organising this fun event.

Annual General Meeting

Following a BBQ lunch, the Club held its AGM. Of course, if you're going to get a sprinkling of rain, why not have it during the meeting. Only in Britain would you find folks sitting in the rain, under a tree to have an AGM. The password protected minutes can be viewed on the website.

Pauline Baily Challenge Cup *This cup is awarded to the person thought to be the Junior Club Member of the year. This is not necessarily a person who won a tournament but someone who has behaved well; played their best tennis sportsmanlike and represented the Club well.*

We were fortunate to secure the services of one of the Club's founder members to come along and present this prestigious award to this year's winner. Pauline, who originally donated the Cup to Needingworth Tennis Club back in 2001 presented the Cup to a very much taller Will Dack, who was also last year's winner.

As always, there was intense competition, but the Selection Committee chose Will as this year's deserved winner as he not only fulfilled the criteria but is now an active player, competing for Needingworth in the local leagues. Congratulations Will, we wish you well for the future



THIS IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT



The Brian Northwood Mixed Doubles Trophy

Looking towards the future with a view to the Cambridgeshire Mixed Doubles league, the Club decided to try something different this year and formalise the tournament and bring it into line with all our other competitions.

With players having a free choice of partners, the record entry of 8 pairs were gradually whittled down with each round, till only the 1st seeds Kaz Tyers & Seb Miller and 2nd seeds Debbie Yates & Chris Moore were left.

The final was always going to be a lengthy tough affair with the hard-hitting top seeds against the rock-solid second seeds. As always with Fast4, it's so important to get out the starting blocks and not make any mistakes, so it wasn't unexpected when the first set went to a tiebreak, what was unexpected – despite some superb tennis from their opposition, Debbie and Chris edged the tiebreak to take the set. Revenge was sweet for the top seeds in the second set with Kaz and Seb winning it 4-2 and forcing the match into the dreaded Championship Tiebreak. After a lot of edgy toing and froing, the winning score line of 10-5 meant the top seeds emerged as the worthy victors and received the trophy from Dorothy Northwood.



Men's Doubles Final

No prizes for guessing who one of the finalist pairs were. This year though, their opposition were Mark Balaam and John White, who earned their appearance in the final the hard way by taking out the No 2 seeds in the semis.

On paper, Michael and his Dad Colin were odds on favourites and when you look at the score line of 4-1, 4-2, you would be forgiven for thinking that this was a one-way affair. However, nothing could be further from the truth.



The underdogs came out fighting and determined to give the crowd a showing. Sadly, the sudden death deuces never went their way but that could be because they always had to serve to Michael. What they did manage on their way to defeat was to break Michael's serve, something they might be able to "dine out" on for years to come.

Ladies Singles Final

The final saw the return of last year's hard hitting runner up Kaz Tyers playing the very experienced rock steady Sue Pandey, a past winner of the competition.

This was always going to be a battle of styles with Kaz, in the initial stages trying to gain the upperhand by leathering the ball to all parts of the court. Sue on the other hand, had seen it all before and did what she does best – retrieve the ball, take the pace off it, loft it into the air and make her opposition play another shot. Losing the first set 1-4, Kaz changed tack and appeared to take on Sue at her own game. The 2nd set duly developed into an ariel bombardment, which was surprisingly exciting as nobody knew who would last the longest. Unfortunately for Kaz, Sue is still the best retriever amongst the ladies and went on to take the second set and the trophy.



Men's Singles Final

I said last year that this blue riband event was one to salivate over and as this year's final had the same two players competing in it, there was nothing to change my mind.

It was no secret that Michael had had an extremely tough match the day before on his way to win the singles championship at Cambridge, "his other club." It was also no secret that he was carrying a shoulder injury as he could be seen in the double's final shaking it out.

From the outset, Michael's apparent game plan was to target the backhand of Chris to get the final over with as quick as he could, whereas Chris was keeping the ball in play and hitting it deep to make Michael play another shot so it's fair to say that given Michael's injury and tiredness the tactic was sound.



OK, Michael may have won the first set 4-1 but in that first exhausting set, he got the first look at his opposition's wheels. Is it even possible that Chris could be faster than last year? Looking at how he ate up the court as he sprinted between the tram lines, I'm inclined to think he was. I wouldn't mind but you'd think he'd have the decency to breathe a bit harder at the end of it.

Michael's escapades the day before clearly had an effect because for the first time ever, he was blowing hard and puffing between the longer points. However, his hitting and accuracy up the line was just sublime and, in the end, took its toll on Chris.

With Chris' backhand really working well, the second set took on a very different look. Michael was still hitting all the lines, but he did seem to be tiring slightly and some errors on the approach shots started to creep in. Spurred on by the enthralled spectators, both players just kept on giving till

there it was, a dreaded tiebreak to decide the second set and of course, this is where nerves of steel and determination kicks in for one and doubts into the other and Michael won the breaker 7-2,

Michael may have won the tournament to become the undisputed Champion for an unprecedented eleventh year in a row, but once more, the real winners were the spectators, for the display put on by these guys was totally awesome. Both finalists put on a showstopper, and it was an absolute privilege for the crowd to be able to sit and watch it albeit it on the edge of their seats, because up to that last point, the second set could have gone either way and then it really would have been a lottery.

Both players fully deserved to be in the final and performed magnificently but I'm pretty sure Michael is the more relieved it's over, for apart from his close match yesterday, it's been a long time since he was pushed so hard by anyone at Needingworth.

Ladies Doubles Final

Due to injuries, this final couldn't take place but will be played within the month

THE DOUBLES RUNNER-UPS

