

# Table tennis – trophies and triumphs

The end of the season is approaching in Scottish table tennis. Several notable tournaments have been taking place, while local leagues are coming to a conclusion.

After [victories for Calum Morrison and Faye Leggett at the National Championships](#), Edinburgh and Lothian table tennis players have achieved further success.

## Inter-League

Edinburgh and Lothians were winners of the coveted Stewart McGowan trophy at the recent Inter-League event, held in Perth. This annual competition, run by [Table Tennis Scotland](#), involves teams representing the various local league associations in Scotland, at a range of age group events. These range from Minors (under-13) to Veterans (over 40). The two-day competition was packed full of good matches, with all the associations contributing well to the overall event.

The Edinburgh & Lothians squad were winners in five categories: Veteran Men, Women's, Junior Girls, Junior Boys and Minor Boys. They dominated the women's event, with their B team winning the event, beating the Edinburgh & Lothians A team 3-0 in the final match.

It was an intense, high quality contest between the two sides, with the pair of Mae Ng (Edinburgh University) and Emma Qu (Murrayfield) playing particularly well to defeat the A team

featuring recently crowned Scottish champion Faye Leggett. In the Junior Girl's event, Holly McNamara (Edinburgh University) and the fast improving Nichole Lee (Murrayfield) came out on top.



The Edinburgh & Lothians Inter-League squad of players and coaches, at Bell's Sports Centre in Perth.

The veterans' event is often one of the most eagerly contested events at Inter-League and this was certainly true this year, with very little between the top sides. The Edinburgh & Lothians veterans' team, captained by Keith Dingwall, finished tied for points with Dundee A and Aberdeen but edged it on 'countback'. After losing to Aberdeen, a very narrow, tense win versus Dundee was key to their triumph. Greig McDonell's 'ugly' win over Paul Monteith typified the hard-fought character of the match.

The Junior Boys event was particularly exciting and concluded with a superb final between West of Scotland and Edinburgh & Lothians. The contest went right down to the final match, a high quality affair between Charlie McGowan of Murrayfield and Nathan Hogg of North Ayrshire. The match reached a crescendo in the fourth set. Play on other tables paused as players and spectators tried to catch a glimpse of the denouement. The rallies became longer and more intense. Hogg bravely fended off three match points before McGowan's fine forehand loop

helped him seal the set 15-13 and the match 3-1. McGowan's little skip of delight demonstrated the importance of the win to him and his side.

Another fantastic conclusion saw Bohao Chen defeat Matthew Psonka (Aberdeen) in an epic duel to help his team take the Minor Boys' trophy. Again, all eyes were on a match which saw fluctuating fortunes and emotions. It brought out the theatrical character of close table tennis matches.

The only significant disappointment for the Edinburgh & Lothians squad was the performance in the Senior Men's event. This was dominated by a very strong West of Scotland A side, featuring leading players Danny Bajwa and Christopher Wheeler. They won all their matches 3-0, including against runners-up Dundee A. Despite a good comeback win versus Dundee A, the Edinburgh & Lothians team (featuring Gordon Muir & Yiming Tang of Murrayfield and Willie Mabon of North Merchiston), were unable to challenge for the trophy. At least they ended on a high, defeating the Edinburgh & Lothians B team 3-0. For the B team, Raphael Valeri (Heriot Watt University) performed impressively over the weekend, including in a very narrow 2-3 loss to Gordon Muir of the A team.

### **Premier Victory for Murrayfield**

Before Inter-League took place, the decisive action of the ELTTL ([Edinburgh & Lothians Table Tennis League](#)) had taken place. Murrayfield I have been the dominant side in the [Edinburgh & Lothians Table Tennis League](#) for some years. They have now won it in the last four seasons, since Edinburgh University's historic win in 2017-18.

This year they faced significant challenges from a squad of strong players representing Fife (playing in Inverkeithing), a good West Lothian side, as well as Murrayfield's own 2nd and 3rd teams. Edinburgh University I have also been competitive with several very capable players in their squad, but unable

to consistently field strong sides.

Murrayfield I clinched the league title with a straightforward 9-1 win against an under-strength Fife I side. They then beat Murrayfield III 6-4 in a close contest. Soon after they confirmed their league supremacy with victory against Murrayfield II in an entertaining match, which finished late into the night. Team captain Muir led from the front, winning his three matches with commanding performances. Borui Chen (two wins) and Charlie McGowan (one win) supported him well as they took the match 7-3.

Muir had enjoyed a 'fun' season, with all members of the squad playing a part. These included experienced players such as Danilo Celli but also the youngsters Borui Chen and Charlie McGowan, who have played in a large proportion of matches.



ELTTL Premier Division winners 2022-23. From left to right:

Charlie McGowan, Gordon Muir, Borui Chen. Photo by Yiming Tang.

Murrayfield have traditionally promoted their most promising young players to their top team, seeking to aid their development. Chen and McGowan are following in the illustrious footsteps of Colin Dalglish and Calum Morrison who were Men's Singles Champions in 2020 and 2023 respectively. They both played in Murrayfield's top team as young players and quickly sped up the league averages.

As in most amateur sports, getting strong sides out consistently is a key aspect in league victories. Muir reflected that Murrayfield had, after an early slip up against Penicuik I, been able "to get good sides out when it mattered". This included the Ukrainian Andrii Paniushkin coming in to bolster the side, including in a key match versus Edinburgh University when McGowan was unavailable. Murrayfield edged this fixture 6-4 with Paniushkin picking up two vital wins.

Muir feels that the general standard of the league had been pretty strong, "with every team containing at least one player of a good level". These included the likes of North Merchiston's Willie Mabon and Haddington's Pete Lugton, who both returned to the Premier Division this season. Lugton, a former Scottish international, currently heads the Premier Division individual averages, just ahead of Borui Chen. As a consequence of this strengthening, there have been substantially more close and competitive matches than in some previous years. Murrayfield's league title was certainly not achieved easily.

The ELTTL season will conclude with the 2023 awards ceremony and Handicap Cup Final, which will be at the Out of the Blue Drill Hall (Leith) on Friday 21 April 2023.

