

Fitting finale to table tennis season

The Edinburgh and Lothians Table Tennis League (ELTTL) brought down the curtain on their season with their social and awards night on Friday.

The well attended event took place, for the first time, at Out of the Blue in Leith. Though primarily an arts venue, the Out of the Blue Drill Hall has had a long relationship with the sport. In the 1950s, the hall hosted matches in the Women's Division of the local league, while it has also been home to the highly popular social ping pong event [Wiff Waff Wednesday](#) over the last decade. On a bright April evening, it proved to be a great venue for competitive matches and a social event.



The Out of the Blue Drill Hall, Leith. Photo by Ewa Well

On Friday Out of the Blue was packed with players young and old reflecting on a good season. Participation in the league is back to pre-pandemic levels, while there is plenty of coaching activity going on in the region.

This was reflected in victory for the Edinburgh & Lothians squad at the Inter-League run by Table Tennis Scotland, and success for Faye Leggett (Edinburgh University) and Calum Morrison (formerly Murrayfield & Edinburgh Sports Club) at the [Scottish National Championships](#) in Perth.

Cup Final

The evening kicked off with the final of the Handicap Cup with teams aiming to pick up the Edinburgh Evening News and Dispatch Rosebowl. This competition allows players of different standards to compete on a level playing field and often produces very entertaining matches. It runs in parallel with ELTTL league fixtures. Teams have been battling it out during the season.

In the final two teams from Murrayfield clashed. In their semi final Murrayfield 4 had come through a very tough battle against Penicuik, with William Wang winning his three matches. Murrayfield 3 had edged out Murrayfield 2 5-3 in a semi-final that could have gone either way. Angus Halliday's three wins for Murrayfield 3 proved absolutely vital.



Teams for the Handicap Final. From left to right: Max Well, Angus Halliday, Gordon Muir, William Wang, Nichole Lee, Rory Thomson. Photo by Ewa Well.

The Handicap Cup Final featured 5 young players, all of whom were born in 2010 or 2011, who display immense promise. Highlights included a superb match between youngsters Angus Halliday and Rory Thomson. This featured some truly

spectacular rallies, with the ball often disappearing high towards the glass roof before, somehow, falling back onto the table. These intense and skilful rallies were much appreciated by those in attendance. The potential of the players clear to see. Despite a spirited comeback by Thomson in the third set, Halliday came out on top.

William Wang's match versus Max Well was a fine contest between orthodox topspin-based play and backspin dominated defensive play. With his 'chopping' style, Well retrieved a number of shots from far back in the court, generating many oohs and ahs from the audience.

In what proved to be the final game, Murrayfield's head coach Gordon Muir was really tested by Nichole Lee who produced some impressive angles with her strong backhand. The match featured some high quality exchanges. Eventually, Muir's tricky variations helped him gain the upper hand and he finished off the match with a powerfully driven backhand. A 5-1 victory for his team, Murrayfield 3. Credit should also go to Team 3's Jerry Ji and Junji Hua, who played in the earlier rounds but were unavailable for the later rounds. The result meant that Murrayfield Memorial Club lifted the Edinburgh Evening News and Dispatch Rosebowl for the 14th time in [their history](#).

Awards

Several of those who took part in the cup final were also recipients of awards. Trophies and pendants were handed out by League President Lindsay Muir, and league Match Secretary Kenneth Benjamin. Winners included Rory Thomson (Murrayfield IX) who was named Most Improved Junior following a very steep rise up the ratings. The Mike Allison Award for the Junior Player of the Year was won by Nichole Lee (Murrayfield IX). Lee has a very impressive recent record including a fantastic performance at last year's Primary School Internationals, where she beat England's no. 1 and 2 in the team event and picked up a bronze medal.



Nichole Lee receives the Mike Allison Award from ELTTL President Lindsay Muir. Photo by Ewa Well.

The prestigious Kirkwood Trophy for outstanding contribution

to table tennis in the region was awarded to Calum Morrison. This recognition came after his victory at the recent Scottish National Championships. Calum's win in the Men's singles was nothing short of extraordinary, coming though against a raft of very strong players – Chris Wheeler, Sean Doherty, Colin Dalgleish, Danny Bajwa – on his way to the final. In the final against Martin Johnson (North Ayrshire), Calum came from 3-1 down, saving a match point in the process and winning in the deciding 7th set. Prior to leaving Edinburgh to go to Nottingham University, Morrison had a superb record in Scottish tournaments, the ELTTL, and Handicap Cup, including achieving a 100 % average in the Premier Division in season 2014-2015.



Calum Morrison receiving the Kirkwood Trophy from Lindsay Muir. Photo by Ewa Well.

Trophies were also given out for the leading player in each division. In the Premier Division, Borui Chen of [champions Murrayfield I](#) won the individual award, by only [0.1% from Peter Lugton of Haddington I](#). This followed a rescheduled final match between Murrayfield I and Haddington, in which Lugton's loss to Zihao Li cost him top spot by the barest of margins. Lugton was a leading player of the 1990s and early 2000s and has recently made an impressive return to competitive play, alongside playing significant administrative and coaching roles within table tennis in East Lothian and Scotland.



Borui Chen. Leading average in the ELTTL Premier Division.
Photo by Ewa Well.

Jakub Kara won the Division 1 award. His Edinburgh University II side were league winners and have gained promotion to the Premier Division along with West Lothian II who just pipped Corstorphine I for runners-up spot. Raphael Valeri of Heriot-Watt University I was the dominant player in Division 2, winning all 57 matches he played. Valeri was impressive all season, including while representing Edinburgh at the recent Inter-League event in Perth. His clubmate Vladyslav Kapinus (Heriot-Watt University II), was the top player in Division 3, but only by 0.3% from Keith Walker of Edinburgh Sports Club III, who made a return to the game this season. Fast improving Max Well of Murrayfield XI topped the averages in Division 4. However, his team had to settle for second place in the league, behind Corstorphine IV.



Alasdair Crofton and Jakub Kara (Edinburgh University II) pick up the Division I trophy . Photo by Ewa Well.

Final league positions

- Premier Division Winners- Murrayfield I
- Runners-up – Murrayfield II
- Division 1 Winners – Edinburgh University II
- Runners-up – West Lothian II
- Division 2 Winners – Murrayfield IX
- Runners-up – Penicuik III
- Division 3 Winners – Corstorphine III
- Runners-up – Edinburgh Sports Club III
- Division 4 Winners – Corstorphine IV
- Runners-up – Murrayfield XI



Raphael Valeri (Heriot Watt University) top of the Division 2 individual averages. Photo by Ewa Well.

Individual Awards

- The Kirkwood Trophy for the Player of the Year:
- Calum Morrison (Murrayfield)
- Most improved Junior – Rory Thomson (Murrayfield IX)
- Most Improved Senior – Yufeng Xia (Edinburgh University IV)
- Most Improved Veteran – John Ormiston (Gullane)
- The Dr Mike Allison Award for the Junior Player of the Year: Nichole Lee (Murrayfield IX)

The John Glen award for the Players' Player of the Year was won by Graeme Sutherland of Edinburgh Sports Club I, by one vote from Robert Porteus of Penicuik IV and Josselin Nespoux of Edinburgh International IV.

Kenneth Benjamin's special award for best performance during his seven years as Match Secretary, was won by Neil Hoggan of Fife IV.



Max Well of Murrayfield XI, who topped the averages in Division 4. Photo by Ewa Well.

Photos courtesy of [Ewa Well Photography](#)