

Hertfordshire Badminton Association

Paul Widdicombe

The county teams have performed well this season, with no team finishing below last season's position.

Following on from last season's inaugural winner of player of the season Phil Hammond, Jenna Tye (Welwyn Garden City) took the honour this season. Jenna started the season in the 3rd team and by Christmas had progressed in to the 2nd team and was recording victories in similar style. A determined young lady who will hopefully continue to progress up the badminton ladder!

Also playing for the second team was Tring's Sam Alexander who was a member of the U17 squad last year, while in the fourth team present U17 squad players Victoria Stokes (Benington), Simon Maine (Potters Bar) and David Westwood (Flamstead) all made their senior county debuts.

E.S.B.A. U13 Team Challenge - National Finals

Phil Westwood

Having qualified in first place in the Eastern Regional heat Herts, along with eleven other teams, descended on the Luton Regional Sports Centre on March 15, for the finals of the E.S.B.A U13 Team Challenge.

There was the usual chaos as teams arrived and gathered, greeted friends, chatted excitedly and began warming-up. Team managers huddled and perused the draw and order of play, agonising over team selections and trying to second-guess their opposite numbers. The first round saw the teams arranged in two boxes, three winners and three runners-up in each. Herts were drawn with Merseyside, Lincolnshire, Devon, Leicestershire and Hampshire. The latter would clearly pose the sternest test of the round, and happily, whether by accident or design, Herts would play them last.

Finally the hubbub and milling throng was stilled for a brief introduction by Eric Brown. Teams then dispersed to their allocated courts for their first games.

Matches consisted teams of four girls and four boys, one game each per player, two each playing singles, two each a doubles, six games in all. Herts kicked-off against Merseyside with a comfortable 5-1 win. And they followed up with three consecutive sound 4-2 wins over Lincolnshire, Devon and Leicestershire respectively. Now assured of a place in the play-off group for the top four, the team faced the in-depth strength of Hampshire, also unbeaten, to close out the first round. Every point would count in the event of a draw, and the team played hard to the last. The team could not recover after losing two games 18-21 and went down to a 1-5 defeat, which hardly reflected the closeness of the match and, unfortunately, the first round scores between group winners and runners-up would carry over to the final round.

In the final round, already one match down to Hampshire, there was no respite as Herts faced the might of Yorkshire. James and Luke comfortably won their two singles, but that was that and Herts lost 2-4. Yorkshire's slight weakness, if that is the word, was in their third and fourth boys. With powerful girls they had paid Herts the compliment of taking no chances and played Middleton and Shiels as their boys doubles pair. But that was small comfort for Herts. The last game was Essex, whom Herts had beaten narrowly on points after a 3-3 draw in the regional heat. This was once again a close and tense affair, the result in doubt until the last. Sadly Herts lost 1-5, but with Rhian's singles and the two doubles all going to Essex on a 21-19 scoreline, it could have so easily been different.

So Yorkshire took first place. Hampshire were second and Essex third, with Herts fourth. Sussex, perhaps surprisingly, were down in fifth place and Notts sixth.

The Herts team had battled and supported each other throughout a long day of ups and downs, and well-merited their final placing as fourth in the country.

Well done to Rhian Blowers, Rebecca Cousins, Hannah Warnes, Charlotte Willis, Emily Westwood (non-playing reserve but ever-present number one supporter and cheerer-up), Oliver Crabb, Luke Donnelly, Akash Jhunjunwala, James Reynolds and Matthew Westwood.

And now for something completely different. As there are simply not enough English events to fill our time, we headed West, paid the Severn Bridge toll and made for Cardiff and the WBU (Welsh Badminton Union) South Wales Zonal JSS (Junior Shuttle Series) tournament. Actually we had been invited down by the Van Hooijdonks. The tournament was held at the Welsh Institute of Sport, which turned out to be an exceptionally good facility, in Sophia Gardens, next to the Glamorgan cricket ground. It is also within sight of the Millennium Stadium, which might look great from inside, but from outside where we were, looms over the surrounding town like so many dockyard cranes.

With a smaller entry than we are used to, winners and runners-up would go through from the boxes. In the U13 singles, Emily was second in her box going on to beat Jaclyn Lai (Ca) in a quarter-final, but falling to the 'big guns' in the semi. In the doubles, playing with Jaclyn, they managed one win in a single box of five pairs.

Matthew, too, went through second in his group, with just one defeat 13-15. Unfortunately in the quarter final he met Philip Godfrey, who had beaten him in the final at Stroud. He and Jamie van Hooijdonk the doubles then, shall we say, failed to realise their potential, and leave it at that!

In the U17 singles, David and William progressed fairly comfortably to a semi-final meeting. Despite David having tweaked an adductor muscle, they produced a epic three-setter, much appreciated by the watching throng. This time William had the edge, winning 15-12, 10-15, 15-12, and went through to meet Anish Kotecha in the final. William's is not an attacking game - he prefers winning from defence. Unfortunately, Anish plays a similar game. Their final was a good game but after very little rest and drained from his semi, William eventually ran out of legs, Anish winning 15-12, 17-15.

It was a similar situation in the doubles. David and Will reached the final (yes, playing together - surprise, surprise!) It was another long three-setter, but one with an injury and the other exhausted, they succumbed eventually to the relentless barrage from Daniel Collard/Gary Roberts losing 10-15 in the third.

All in all a good day out: a great place to play and well arranged for spectators; the scale of the event made it less frenetic that we're used to at E.S.B.A.s; the people were welcoming and friendly; the organisation was quiet and efficient; three medals to take home and unlike the E.S.B.A's, they are engraved with the event; the sun shone all day; there was time for a stroll along the riverbank just outside - Emily still cannot skim stones; and mysteriously there was no queue on the M25 on the way back. What more could we want?!

North Herts U13 and U11 tournaments

Bob Green (Stressed out Organiser!)

We were overwhelmed with the turn out for this tournament held at Hitchin Boys School on Sunday March 23. Over 100 youngsters playing both singles and doubles events, an increase of about 50 percent on 2002. This was fantastic for junior badminton. However, it did cause logistical problems, with only four courts available at the venue.

The solution to the problem was to split both the single and doubles events into two halves, one half playing their matches, while the other was involved in various organised activities in the dining hall, and on the playing field (thankfully the weather was terrific). Then the two halves swapped over.

The majority of entrants were for the U11 events, though a decent number of U13 boys also took part, the lowest number was for the U13 girls, where only 5 entered.

Due to the numbers, the format was games up to 5 points, with the winner staying on for up to 3 wins. First time losers were put back on to try to make sure all players had 3 games. All the three time winners went through to the playoffs for the gold and silver medals. The results were:

	Winner	Runner-up
U11 Girls Singles	Laura Bygrave	Jenny Barnard
U11 Boys Singles	Elliott Miles	Scott Williams
U13 Girls Singles	Bethany Harris	Claire Roberts
U13 Boys Singles	Stephen Barnard	Adam Monk
U11 Girls Doubles	Claire Devonald/Charlotte Gawley Green	Rosie Kearns/Berenice Saunders
U11 Boys Doubles	Elliott Miles/Max Westcott	Gareth Lusty/Benjamin Roe
U13 Girls Doubles	Danielle Hill/Katie Birtwistle	Bethany Harris/Jessica Harris
U13 Boys Doubles	Stephen Barnard/Adam Monk	Tom Austin/Nick Meakin

Prizes were also awarded for the various activities that took place in the dining hall and all participants received a certificate and goodie before leaving.

Having spoken directly to parents and children and overheard comments during the day, it was apparently a LONG but FUN DAY.

This would not have been the case if all those that came forward to help on the day had not done so. Several were parents who had come along to see their children play and ended up scoring for most of the day. I tried to thank them all at the time but if I did miss anyone - thanks a million. The other reason the day was such a success was because of the excellent behaviour of all 100 plus children - well done!

Comments from Charlotte Gawley Green (U11)

It was the first competition I had taken part in, so I did not know what to expect. Most of the matches were hard. I had lots of fun. It was exciting and entertaining. The quizzes were extremely hard but interesting all the same. The instructions were very clear and even though it was so crowded it was not too confusing. When it was all over I could not believe we had won and I can't wait to play again next year.

U13 National Championships/U13 Standard Challenge

Phil Westwood

As we headed once more for the Kettering Leisure Village on yet another glorious morning in what was to be the sunniest March on record, I began to wonder where they had gone. I mean all those months. Another week, another tournament, no time to dwell, through Indian Summer, musty Autumn, frosts, Christmas cheer, floods, winds and chaotic snow, eating up the miles, venue after venue. Now it seemed the dark days of Winter had melted stealthily away and suddenly, here we were. Wall to wall Spring sunshine and the big one, the stage, the end of season reckoning, the one in which they all want most to succeed: the BAofE U13 National Championships.

And then, sadly for most, all too quickly it was over. In the singles, only Akash and James survived the box stage. Akash subsequently went out to Gary Fox (GM) but James, on better form than of late, and showing his usual determination, made light work of Ben Ferrao (Dv) and went on to despatch Ben Tier (Ha) in the quarter final, the latter game redressing his defeat by Ben at the Team Championships just a week earlier.

Of the other Herts hopefuls, none made a showing beyond their boxes, but 'it's tough at the top', and it is easy to forget that this is the top. This is a National Championship and the competitors are a select few. They should all take heart, that there is no more than a handful of players nationally who can beat any one of them, and the margins are close. For the record, Luke Donnelly fell to Mark Middleton (Yo) who went on to reach the final; Oliver Crabb lost out to Xavier Bramley (Dv), who had one of his better days - going on to beat Andrew Brunning who, in contrast, could not duplicate his recent form; and Matthew Westwood again found himself drawn against the eventual winner, Luke Thomson (Sx). It was Luke, too, who ended James Reynolds' run, winning their semi-final 15-13, 15-6.

In the doubles too, all three pairs stumbled at the box stage. Oliver Crabb/Luke Donnelly met Ross Little (GM)/Michael Mellor (My) who were in top form and who went on to the semi-finals, losing a long and intensely fought three setter to the eventual winners Middleton/Shiels (Yo). Matthew Westwood/ Alex Guntert (Bu) met Luke Thomson (yes, again!) playing with Ben Tier, whilst James Reynolds/Pierre Gaudion (Gy) lost their third set 13-15 to Cappleman/Forsyth (Ha).

And Herts sole representative in the girls tournament, Charlotte Willis, lost her singles group to Philippa Rogers (Ch) and playing with Katie Walters (Ha) failed to break out of the group in the doubles.

Only in the mixed did Herts make better progress. Matthew Westwood/Charlotte Willis won their qualifier against Ryan Koslicki (Nm)/Chlor Chambers (Yo), but went out in the first round proper to would be semi-finalists Mark Newbery (Ha)/Emma Woolley (St). Oliver Crabb/Philippa Rogers (Ch) beat Ross Little (GM)/Alexandra Langlely (Li) but lost their quarter against Gary Fox (GM).Caroline Felton (Ex). Luke Donnelly/Samantha Reynolds (Nm) had a good win over Daniel Shiels/Hayley Shipley (Yo) but they too went out in the quarters to Newbery/Woolley. James Reynolds/Bronwyn Powell (Sx) won through to a semi-final by beating Chris Tustion (Ox)/Joanne White (St) 17-14 in the third, only to lose to Newbery/Woolley. In fact, Newbery/Woolley had met and put out Herts opposition in three consecutive rounds. The mixed title was won comfortably by Luke Thomson (Sx)/Fontaine Chapman (Wk).

U13 Standard Challenge

The following day saw the BAofE U13 Standard Challenge for players non-premier at the start of the season. No less than five Herts girls entered the singles but fared no better than the boys the previous day.

Rhian Blowers, Rebecca Cousins, Helena Lewczynska, Hannah Warnes and Emily Westwood all made their exit at the box stage, as did Sam Williams and Matthew Trott in the boys. Matthew Westwood, as one of the few promoted to premier during the season, should have had a good run, but thoughtlessly the draw placed three 'promoted premier' players in the same small corner, and he went out in the second round to Jamie van Hooijdonk, who had won the two previous tournaments he played, knocking Mathew out on each occasion. He did in fact go on to win again.

In the girls doubles it was a similar story. Rhian/Sarah Lewin (Nf), Helena/Harriet Mortimer (Av) and Emily/Nicole Walker (Ex) all foundered at the box stage. Rebecca/Hannah had two good wins in their box but lost, 7-15 to Jenna Walker/Jessica Fletcher (Yo) the eventual winners. In the boys, Matthew Trott/Sam Williams also found the going tough. Matthew Westwood/Jamie van Hooijdonk (WG) lost one game in their box but were reprieved, scraping through on a three-way tie by just one point. They reached the final with a further two comfortable wins but there, against two very eager and determined players, Nicholas Shoreman (La)/Toby Sweet (Ke), they failed to respond in kind and duly lost 11-15.

Well, that's the end of the main business for another season, but there are still a few awards left unclaimed. The children have been giving them out to parents during the season, but if you see one you recognise and haven't had yet, step up now to complete your set.

We have the 'Parental Behaviour most likely to irritate a Losing Player (Long Suffering' Award; the double award of the 'Most Supporting Miles (Taxi) Cup and the 'Most Boring Car Journey (are we nearly there) Ribbon; there's the Scroll for 'Best Sense of Direction in a Strange Town (when late)'; the Plate for 'Best Supporting Snacks'; the 'Best Fixture Secretary and Unlimited Funds Manager' Award; there's the very special 'Most Up to Date Wardrobe and Kit Supervisor' Cup; and finally a general award given to almost every parent, the 'Most Ignored Technical Director' Trophy.

H.S.B.A. Tournaments

Last H.S.B.A. Tournaments of 2002/03 Season

Shân Lumb

It was yet another early Sunday morning at Stevenage Leisure Centre and this time it was the turn of the U10 singles and U13'A' singles.

All thirty one U13 boys disappeared into the bowls hall while everyone else started their games in the main hall. The U10 boys had 20 entrants and played in 5 boxes. Box winners were Daniel Regan, Elliott Miles, Max Westcott, Gareth Lumb and Harry Sandford. Daniel, Elliott, Max (beating Gareth) and Harry won their quarter finals and Daniel and Harry went on to contest a very good final, Daniel leading 12-8 at one point and Harry making a comeback to win. There were one or two close games in the plate, with Ryan McCarthy beating Rafe Hawkins-Hill in the final.

The eleven U10 girls played in 2 boxes with Daniella Farsiani and Abigail Bursack winning easily. They beat Isabelle Sadler and Hannah Slaney respectively to reach the final which Abigail won. The plate was won by six year old Zandra Ho who beat Claire Widdicombe.

Results

Boys Final Harry Sandford beat Daniel Regan 15-12
Semi-finalists were Elliott Miles and Max Westcott

Plate Final Ryan McCarthy beat Rafe Hawkins-Hill 15-8

Girls Final Abigail Bursack beat Daniella Farsiani 15-8
Semi-finalists were Isabelle Sadler and Hannah Slaney

Plate Final Zandra Ho beat Claire Widdicombe 15-2

Ten girls in the U13 singles played in 2 boxes, with Charlotte Willis and Rhian Blowers winning and Rebecca Cousins and Miranda the runners-up. Charlotte disposed of Miranda 15-3 while Rebecca turned the tables on Rhian 15-6. The final was hard fought with Charlotte coming out the victor. The six players in the plate all came from St Albans Girls High School with Melanie Harcourt winning the final.

In the U13 boys, played in 7 boxes, there were some close games. The box winners were Gregg Roantree, Matthew Westwood, Stephen Barnard, Adam Monk, Luke Donnelly, Akash Jhunjunwala and James Reynolds. Both Gregg and James had some very hard games on their way to the final which proved to be a very hard fought match with James coming out as winner. The plate games were much easier with Vinoth Gnanaganesh beating Alex Regan in the final.

Results

Girls Final **Charlotte Willis** beat Rebecca Cousins 21-16
Semi-finalists were Miranda Atkins and Rhian Blowers
Plate Final **Melanie Harcourt** beat Nisha Karnani 21-14

Boys Final **James Reynolds** beat Gregg Roantree 23-21
Semi-finalists were Stephen Barnard and Luke Donnelly
Plate Final **Vinoth Gnanaganesh** beat Alex Regan 15-7

That was the morning!! In the afternoon it was the turn of the U10 doubles and the U15 'A' singles. As there were only 4 pairs of U10 girls they played in one group which was won by Abigail Bursack/Daniella Farsiani.

The boys were in 3 groups with Daniel Regan/Harry Sandford, Ewan Berry/Gareth Lumb and Elliott Miles/Max Westcott winning the boxes. Daniel/Harry proved too strong for everyone and won the competition easily. The plate had some very young players (one pair being just 6 years old) and one or two playing in their first tournament. It was won by Steven George/Michael Peak, who having won just one game in their box decided they were on a winning streak, kept on going and were highly delighted when they realised that they would be going home with a medal!!

Results

Girls	Winners	Abigail Bursack / Daniella Farsiani
	Runners-up	Hannah Slaney / Claire Widdicombe
	3rd	Jessica Barnes / Isabelle Sadler
	4th	Zandra Ho / Hemali Patel

Boys Final **Daniel Regan/Harry Sandford** beat Elliott Miles/Max Westcott 15-2
Semi-finalists were Ewan Berry/Gareth Lumb and Rahul Amin/Raj Borkhataria
Plate Final **Steven George/Michael Peak** beat Sean Fell/Jack Whalley 15-5

In the U15 boys, 20 boys played in 5 groups where there were some very hard games - in one group three boys lost just one game each, to 14, 13 and 12 respectively. Some of the knock-out games were quite hard too and the final between Nigel Tao and Arjun Mehta was an absolute cracker, with both boys playing good rallies and trying to out think each other, Nigel finally coming out as winner. In the plate, Luke Donnelly had a very hard semi beating Gregg Roantree 17-14, while Jonathan Miller had a somewhat easier task in his half of the draw. The final went on for a very long time (longer than the main final) with first one, then the other going ahead and Luke eventually managing to overcome his older and taller opponent.

The girls, playing in 2 groups of 4 and 2 groups of 3, went through much more quickly. Box winners were Laura Cousins, Emma Stokes, Victoria Stokes and Kate Lester. Laura overcame Emma 15-4, but in the other semi Victoria surprised even herself by beating Kate 15-12. In the final, however, Laura proved much the stronger winning easily. The plate had some closer games with Emily Cant and Claire Kerry winning through to the final which Claire won.

Results

- Boys Final** **Nigel Tao** beat Arjun Mehta 21-19
Semi-finalists were Simon Barson and Damian Bruce-Hickman
- Plate Final **Luke Donnelly** beat Jonathan Miller 23-21
- Girls Final** **Laura Cousins** beat Victoria Stokes 21-1
Semi-finalists were Emma Stokes and Kate Lester
- Plate Final **Claire Kerry** beat Emily Cant 21-5

I would just like to add a note of thanks to Kate Lester, Rhian Blowers, Elliott Miles and Daniel Regan for supplying my son with chocolate during the day and keeping him out of mischief!!!

(As Tournament Secretary - and general dogsbody - I would like to say a very big thank you to all those who have helped this year, checking players in, writing down scores at the main desk and on the second copies, etc. If I name names, I'm sure to forget someone, but I would like to mention Marion Conway, for all the endless hours she spends putting children on court and Ceri Lumb, who organises the play in the bowls hall and invariably does a brilliant job to get the games finished in time so that the bowlers can get in at 2.00 pm without cause for complaint! Also Charity Warnes for organising the raffle and all the young players who have done a wonderful job in selling raffle tickets to help swell the H.S.B.A. funds. Thank you all very much. Megan Lumb)

Shires League Match

Phil Westwood

Warwickshire v Hertfordshire U17

After a very tense day's badminton it was a reflective Herts U17 side that trailed away from the Solihull Boys' School.

Having lost 9-11 to Leicestershire a month ago, with an under-strength side, only a win against Warwickshire would give Herts a chance of progressing to the finals.

Games were played in the order on the score sheet, with all four games in each group played side by side. First on court the mixed. Simon Maine/Nicola Farr and William Westwood/Victoria Stokes notched up Herts' first wins, but the other two games, both going to three sets, were eventually taken by Warwicks. Match score 2-2 after the first round.

The boys singles followed and Herts again took an early lead when David Westwood, playing number one, had a comfortable win - well, in terms of points anyway - over Paul Shelley. Anthony Moye followed suit. Herts were two up. But once again the other two went to three and once again they both went to Warwicks, Will unfortunate to lose his third set 14-17 to a much improved Dalvir Matharu. The match score was now 4-4, with the girls singles up next.

The focus of this round was a dispute at a critical point during the number two game between Emma Stokes and Chantelle Chapman. Earlier in the game there had been some pettiness over the shuttles. Now there was disagreement over the score at the very end of the third set. Chantelle thought she had served from 10-4 and won the game, but Emma insisted it had been 8-4 and the score was now 9-4. Somehow they agreed to play again from 10-4. But when play restarted, the aggrieved Emma, though handicapped by a cold, was fiercely determined and gradually clawed back the deficit whilst Chantelle seemed still to brood over her 'lost' win. And amazingly, although the serve changed hands countless times, Emma levelled the scores. A, by this time, despondent Chantelle set to three, but still could not win a rally on her serve, and Emma edged to an improbably 13-10 win. In view of what was hanging on the result of this match, and the already obvious parity of the teams, it is a credit to all the players that this incident did not affect the atmosphere of friendly rivalry in which, this game apart, the match was played throughout.

On the other courts, Katie Comras, number three at Leicester, drafted into the number one spot, found Katherine Grant too strong. Nicola Farr took her match to three, only to lose 7-11 in the third, but Victoria Stokes gained a good win playing number three. Now the match score was 6 apiece, resolutely deadlocked, and all set for the doubles.

Ant/Will had two narrow wins, beating Paul/Amritpal 15-6, 17-14, then Simon Canning /Dalvir 15-12, 8-15, 15-12. But David/Simon lost both of their equally hard fought games, 3-15, 15-8, 11-15 and 12-15, 12-15. And still the teams could not be separated. It was eight all and on to the girls doubles.

Katie/Victoria lost to the number one pair 15-17 in the second - 9-8 to Warwicks. But Emma/Nicola won in three against the number two pair - 9 games all.

Herts now needed both remaining games for a place in the finals. Sadly, though Emma/Nicola played their hearts out, as they had done at Leicester, they lost their final game by a margin almost as narrow as could possibly be 16-17, 13-15. The last game was now academic, but inevitably in such a match, this too went to three and ended with Katie/Victoria losing 13-15 to make the final match score 11-9 to Warwickshire: 26-25 in sets, and in aces Herts actually out scored their opponents 601 to 584.

So for the second time in a month, an under-strength Herts side had played out of their skins and come close, but had been unable to repeat the full strength side's RIO successes, where they had beaten Warwicks 10-5 and Leicestershire 9-6.

The U17 team relies heavily on younger players. This bodes well for the future but unfortunately we had had to play our only two realistic challengers away from home and on days when for a variety of reasons some of those younger players were not present to support the U17s. Apart from those active at Doncaster on the day, all the Warwickshire players turned out, and sadly our older U17s had lost their one chance of a Shires League Final.

But what a match! The players could not have done more. Eight of Warwicks' eleven wins were three setters. Of the 51 games played thirteen, a quarter, were won by 3 points or less, eight of those by Warwicks (!!), so perhaps 'home' does give an advantage. Another eight were won by only 4 points - that's almost half within a margin of only four points. And of twenty rubbers played, eleven went to three sets. A couple of points here, a lucky net shot there and on another day the result could have been reversed.

Inter Counties Tournament 2003

Tony Clarke (17 Squad Manager)

The U17 team set off by minibus from Birchwood Sports Centre dead on time at 9.00 am (surprise, surprise!). With managers Tony Clarke (navigator) and Pat Walker (driver) the team, David and Will Westwood, Simon Maine, Anthony Moye, Joe Webb, Laura Cousins, Frankie Edelmann, Katie Comras, Emma Stokes and Nicola Farr, were looking forward to competing at this year's I.C.T. with 37 other counties. The tournament was taking place over the four days before Easter at Nottingham University. Following behind with a car full of players luggage were helpers Christine Comras and Joan Cousins.

After a stop at Leicester Forest Services, we arrived at our hall of residence (Sherwood Hall) in good time for lunch and our first match against Somerset at the University Sports Hall at 1.45. We were seeded to win our first round group with Somerset, Ulster and Derbyshire. We duly beat Somerset 10-0, followed by a 7-3 victory over Ulster. Then it was back for dinner at the hall and a trip to Sandiacre to play Derby at 8.00 pm. We beat Derby 7-3 to head our first round group. And so to bed after a very long and successful day!

It was an early start the next day, all four second round matches to be completed today, starting at 9.00 am at Chilwell Sports Centre. Our first match was against Greater Manchester, with two in the afternoon - again at Chilwell - followed by an evening match at the University, a tough schedule for a young team.

We won our first match 6-4 and followed this with a 9-1 win against Northumberland and a 7-3 win against Leinster. Six wins out of six now guaranteed Herts a place in the top eight. Our final match in the group was against the No.3 seeds, Sussex. Could we win and secure a place in the final and another medal? Unfortunately, Sussex had too many big guns in Dean George and Heather Olver. The team fought all the way but finally lost out 4-6, so we would be playing off for 5th - 8th place in the final round starting the following day.

Only two matches on the third day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon followed by the disco in the evening. This year the disco had competition - Arsenal v Manchester United on Sky. Those who wanted to watch the football were escorted to the disco after the final whistle. Pat and I went to the Managers meeting in the bar at Derby Hall while Christine and Joan organised the players. Everyone was happy, I think.

Back to the badminton! In the first match we beat Leicestershire 6-4 before beating Bucks 6-4, the football and the disco. Only Lincolnshire to beat on the final day to finish in a brilliant 5th place.

Our final match against Lincs was scheduled for 2.15 pm, which meant missing most of the final. Why are we and Lincs the only two teams playing at this time? We all wanted to watch Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. Never mind, we'll manage to see the start and hopefully the final games. As all of us were sitting waiting for the final, the mystery of the schedule was to become obvious. There was a presentation! I, together with John Foster and Rhona Robbins, was presented with the 'English Badminton Award' for longstanding exceptional service to badminton in England. The award, a well kept secret, was presented by the president of the BAofE in front of all the spectators - fantastic!!

After the first two games of the final, it was off to play Lincs. With the score at 4 all with just the mixed to play, it was very tight. I need not have worried. We took both mixed to win 6-4 and secure 5th place behind Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Sussex and Gloucestershire. It seems that Notts are destined to be runners-up, always the bridesmaid, never the bride. Well done, Yorks - hard luck, Notts!

Everyone played their part in the team's success. Laura played excellently to record eight wins out of ten at 1st singles and Katie also won most of her second singles, being the only Herts player to record a 21-0 win. The boys singles was particularly tough with David playing all ten 1st singles against some of the best in England. This, however, allowed Will and Anthony to win most of the 2nd boys singles. In the doubles, all the pairs played well - Will/Ant, Laura/Frankie at 1st and Simon/Joe, Emma/Nicola at 2nd won most of their games. However, the real strength of the team was the mixed pairings of David/Frankie and Simon/Nicola. David/Frankie won six out of ten at first mixed and Simon/Nicola were undefeated winning nine out of nine. A great performance by a very young team!

20th Easter Badminton Festival, Holton, Oxon

Phil Westwood

For anyone unfamiliar with this particular competition, the Oxford Easter Festival is, at least in the junior section, a sort of warm-down, less hectic than the season's main business. Partly it has to do with it being a three 'in-between' age groups - U12, U14 and U16 - having a chance to show what they can do; but with the spread of ages side by side keeping things in perspective. Imagine Anthony and Emily competing on adjacent courts and you will get the picture. Partly it has to do with the format. Only level and mixed doubles are contested and there is a limit on numbers. But largely, I would suspect, the tone is set by the laid-back, self-deprecating approach of the Buckinghamshire who quietly keep things ticking over, the score charts up to date, and treat both progress and fixture-congestion with the same good humour. None of which is to say that the games were not fiercely competitive. And with, albeit small, prize money down to third place, this is not surprising. But for most, apart from a few parents and odd player of the more noisy, competitive variety, whose posturings stood out sharply in these surroundings, it was about playing in good spirit and playing being fun.

The U12 section was dominated by some of this year's top U11s; Philip Aspinnall (La) and Matthew Nottingham (GM) won the boys doubles, whilst Jessica Fletcher (Yo) and Haley Rogers (Ch) took the girls. These four then paired-up to contest the mixed, with Matthew/Haley beating Philip/Jessica in the final. I suppose it's small comfort that they are all from different counties. Alex Gomar/Akash Jhunjhunwala came second in the boys, a single box of five pairs, earning a place in the final; in reality a second shot at the box winners. They lost 17-21, but played the best I've seen them play to push Aspinnall/Nottingham so close. It was a similar story in the girls, where Rebecca Cousins/Hannah Warnes were runners-up in a box of six and then runners-up in the final. Emily Westwood/Hannah Bently (St) gained one win to finish fifth in what was a very strong field. In the mixed, Emily/Chris Coles (Av) beat Akash/Rebecca in their box game, but both pairs qualified and came through a second round to finish as semi-finalists.

In the U14 and U16 events, the story was quite different, with at least one Herts player winning every final. Matthew Westwood/Chris Coles (Av) came third of five in their U14 boys box, but were unlucky to lose a closely fought second round game 17-21 to Andrew Brunning (Ex)/Daniel Boxall (Wi). Chris did sterling work, playing both U12 and U14, in something like six matches back to back. Nigel Tao/Jonathan Taylor (Ox) and Victor Liew/Arthur Cheung (Bu) won their respective boxes and duly progressed via second round and semi-finals to the final where, on this occasion, Victor/Arthur came out on top. There was no U14 girls event, so on to the mixed. Matthew Westwood/Hannah Warnes finished fifth out of five, somewhat out-gunned by a strong true-U14 field. Nigel Tao/Victoria Stokes were runners-up in the box, losing 18-21 to the Bucks pair Arthur Cheung/Natalie Gilders. But, as was to happen three times on the day in the older age groups, Nigel/Victoria over-turned this result in the final, winning 21-6.

But it was at U16 that Herts was most dominant. Anthony /William beat the Hotchen brothers, Andrew and Christopher, 21-19, to win the boys doubles, in a tight match the outcome of which had been in the balance throughout. In the girls, Kate Lester/Victoria Stokes, second in their group of five, lost 15-21 to Rebecca Lee/Lauren Thomas (Mx) in the second round. In the other group, Emma /Nicola beat Laura Cousins/Kathleen Mulcahy (Av) 21-19, but the latter pair still won the box. Both pairs went on to win second round and semi-final matches to set up a rematch in the final where, this time, Laura/Kathleen emerged the winners. Finally the U16 mixed saw William/Laura defeat Anthony/Emma 21-14 in their last game to win the box, only for the result to be immediately reversed in the final. For once I can confidently say that 'a good day was had by all' because no one lost out - each competitor being awarded a chocolate cream egg on completion of their programme. Or in Nigel's case, six! How does he do it?

Shires League U13 Finals

Phil Westwood

So here we are again: early alarm, grab a quick bite, pack a few goodies; are you sure you've got your racket/drinks bottles/shoes/....; and the familiar dash (how many times is that this season?) up the M1. But this time it was different. The Shires League has been going on 'north of Watford', quietly minding its own business, for a number of years. This year saw an expansion of the League, Herts being one of the new entrants, and a new format consisting three, broadly regional leagues. And now the three winning teams and the three runners-up had converged on Babbington College Leicester chosen, I suspect, not so much for its central location as for the excellence of their cheese toasties.

These finals, then, were something entirely new, not only for Herts, but a new format even for any 'old hands' who had made it this far. For the simple reason of limited time, there would be a preliminary round - a winner playing a runner-up - to sort the teams into two groups, the winners of this round playing for places one to three, and the losers playing for places four to six. A similar system, for those familiar with it, to that used at the ICT. And in fact the games format used in the regional leagues was abandoned, also in favour of exactly the ICT model: two mixed, two boys and two girls singles, and two boys and two girls doubles; players allowed no more than two events per match.. So matches would be the best of ten games with draws being decided on points. This is a nightmare for team managers trying to out-guess selections by their opposite numbers, but it makes for exciting competition. And so it proved.

Herts first match was Sussex, runners-up from Group C, with the notable absence of Luke Thomson and Bronwyn Powell. In this format the opening mixed round is often the key. Luke Donnelly/Rhian Blowers found Andrew Hartridge/Kate Stephens too strong, losing 16-21, whilst Herts heads fell further as on the adjacent court second pair Matthew Westwood/Hannah Warnes faded after a strong start. But somehow, from 11-16 down, Matthew/Hannah recovered to win 21-17. that's the sort of spirit that can win matches. Match score 1-1. Next up the boys singles. James Reynolds and Oliver Crabb had two easy wins, 21-2 and 21-5 respectively. 3-1 to Herts, and, crucially too, a points advantage building in the event of a draw. The girls singles was always going to be tough. Charlotte Willis went down, out-gunned by Kimberley George, but never stopped fighting, gaining 7, possibly vital, points. But when a determined Rebecca Cousins beat Justine Thompson 21-11, Herts could breathe more easily. Match score 4-2.

The 'old firm' of Oliver Crabb/Luke Donnelly took on the Sussex number ones, and whilst the new pairing of James Reynolds/Matthew Westwood made short work of the second pair, winning 21-3, Oliver/Luke had a much tougher game. They were still playing when Rebecca Cousins/Hannah Warnes won the number two girls doubles 21-3 to give Herts an unassailable 6-2 lead in the match.

Oliver/Luke pulled clear and ran out comfortable 21-11 winners. Charlotte Willis/Rhian Blowers lost the last game 8-21 to Kimberley George/Justine Thompson for a final match score: 7-3 to Herts and a minimum third place in the overall competition.

Whilst all this was going-on, Yorkshire had beaten Warwickshire 10-0 in a real mismatch. Fontaine Chapman had shown some resistance, but lost her two games 18-21. No other opponents had reached doubles figures. Phew!!

But if this was one-sided, the Hampshire - Nottinghamshire tussle could hardly have been closer. Notts took the two mixed, but Hants replied with the boys singles. Match score 2-2. Notts then took the girls singles for 4-2, but Hants again came back, taking the boys doubles. Match score 4-4. I do like this format. And when Hants girls doubles second pair won 21-7 for a 5-4 lead, Hants had won on points regardless of the one game still in progress. That game went to Notts for a 5-5 to give parity on games at least.

At the end of the preliminary round, then, the following had been decided: Yorkshire/ Hampshire/ Hertfordshire would play for places 1-3; Nottinghamshire/Sussex/Warwickshire would contest 4-6. For what it's worth, those are the same three winners and runners-up as had started the day. Now, one team from each group had a break whilst the other two did battle.

When David met Goliath, David won. Unfortunately when Herts met Yorkshire, there was no miracle. Herts got hammered 8-2. But credit should go to James Reynolds for his gritty 21-13 win over Mark Middleton, and James again, and Matthew Westwood for an astonishing come-back in their doubles. Turning round 11-7 up, against Luke Hutchinson/Clinton Lau, they looked good. But with a succession of errors they slipped to 11-16 down. And at 14-20 it looked all over. Yet somehow they gained new impetus. Amid squeals, groans and roars of encouragement from both sides, they reeled in the score to level and then win 21-20 - the most unlikely win of the day.

Herts licked their wounds whilst Yorkshire repeated their performance to beat Hampshire 7-3. Again, there were notable performances in defeat, Mark Newbery beating Luke Hutchinson 21-20 and Olivia Payne beating Hayley Shipley 21-19.

Now with Yorkshire secure in first place, Herts and Hants were left to scrap for second. And scrap they did! The match was 1-1 after the mixed, in which Luke Donnelly/Charlotte Willis plugged away to gain a valuable 21-17 win from a long and closely fought game. It was 2-2 after the boys singles. but with both girls somewhat mismatched, Herts were soon at 4-2 down and, at 22 points adrift, could not afford to lose another game.. Remarkably, Herts then took both boys doubles, 21-16. Oliver/Luke beat Mark Newbery/Simon Foster and James/Matthew beat Mark Cappleman/Tom Forsyth. We were level again 4-4. This is not good for the parental constitution!! The girls doubles were then shared with identical wins, 21-10 each, for the match to finish all-square 5-5 on games, but with Hampshire taking second place by

virtue of 12 points. Hampshire were gracious in victory, acknowledging the closeness of their win. So third for Herts, but this had been a solid all round team performance, supporting and encouraging each other all the way.

In the 4-6 group, Sussex beat Warwickshire 8-2, but with three game finishing 21-19 and another 21-18, all going to Sussex, this was not the walk-over the score would suggest. Notts then beat Warwicks 8-2 as well, and this was the walk-over the score suggests. And to complete the symmetry, Notts then beat Sussex by, well it had to be, 8-2.

So first place, by a mile, went to Yorkshire. Hants took second by a whisker over Herts in third. Notts were a clear fourth, Sussex fifth and Warwicks sixth.

But what a tremendous day! The noise, the excitement, the mini ICT atmosphere, great preparation for these young players. In the league stages there were naturally some duff games, some close games, some won against expectation and some lost due to circumstance. But for those that made it through, however they got there, what a finale to a long year's competition.

And next year it'll be even bigger!!

Tournament Results

U15 Olve, Belgium

<u>Girls Singles</u>	Semi-final	Katie Comras
<u>Girls Doubles</u>	Semi-final	Katie Comras
<u>Boys Singles</u>	Quarter final	Kamran Haq
<u>Boys Doubles</u>	Quarter final	Daniel Adams (Yo)/ Kamran Haq
<u>Mixed Doubles</u>	Quarter final	Paul Schueller (Nm)/ Katie Comras Kamran Haq /Karen Hird (Bu)

Hampshire U14

<u>Boys Singles</u>	Quarter Final	James Reynolds lost to Oliver Crichton (So) 3-21 Victor Liew lost to Arthur Cheung (Bu) 18-21
<u>Boys Doubles</u>	Semi-final	Arthur Cheung (Bu)/ Victor Liew beat James Reynolds /Chris Tustian (Ox) 21-8
	Final	Arthur Cheung/ Victor Liew beat Callum Lawson / Matthew Showan (Ha) 21-4
<u>Girls Singles</u>	Final	Katie Comra lost to Sarah Walker (Ex) 10-21
<u>Girls Doubles</u>	Final	Katie Comras /Sarah Walker (Ex) lost to Karen Hird (Bu)/Samantha Ward (Sy) 13-21

U13 Nationals

<u>Boys Singles</u>	Semi-final	James Reynolds lost to Luke Thomson (Sx) 6-15, 11-15
<u>Mixed Doubles</u>	Quarter final	Oliver Crabb /Philippa Rogers (Ch) lost to Gary Fox (Gm)/Caroline Felton (Ex) 6-15, 11-15 Luke Donnelly /Samantha Reynolds (Nm) lost to Mark Newbery (Ha)/Emma Woolley (St) 13-15, 7-15
	Semi-final	James Reynolds /Bronwyn Powell (Sx) lost to Mark Newbery/Emma Woolley 5-15, 11-15

U13 Standard Challenge

<u>Boys Doubles</u>	Final	Jamie van Hooijdonk/ Matthew Westwood lost to Nicholas Shoreman (La)/Toby Sweet (Ke) 11-15
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Warwickshire U16

Girls Singles

Quarter final

Katie Comras lost to Michelle Cheung 1-21

Girls Doubles

Semi-final

Frankie Edelmann/Kate Lester lost to Krissy Koslicki (Nh)/Kirsten Reed (Sx) 14-21

From the editor:

Thanks to Tony Clarke, Shân Lumb and Phil Westwood for sending in reports. (Sorry Phil - no rest days and no remission for good behaviour!!) The season is very nearly at an end, although there are still a few tournaments remaining. Perhaps someone going to the U12 tournaments could provide a report for next time. Closing date for the next issue of the newsletter is **Thursday, June 26.**

DON'T FORGET THE AGM!!!

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Hertfordshire Schools Badminton Association

Monday, June 23
at the
Park Lounge, Campus West,
Welwyn Garden City

Time: 7.30 for 8.00 pm