

2016 MASTER HOME INTERNATIONAL SCOTLAND

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|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| Event Dates: | Friday 20 th - Saturday 21 st May 2016 | | |
| Address: | Aberdeen Squash and Racketball Club, Aberdeen. | | |
| England Teams: | Men's O50 | Men's O70 | Women's O50 |
| | Darren Withey (Captain) Marc Aldridge Raymond Burke MBE Peter Gunter Peter Lonsdale Murray Scott | Adrian Wright (Captain) Chris Ansell Rodney Boswell Mike Clemson Brian Hardcastle Dave Hardern | Rachel Woolford (Captain) Mandy Akin Rose Bamber Hilary Kenyon Isobel Smith Shelley Walsh |

MEN'S OVER 50 RESULTS SUMMARY

| Team |  |  |  |  | Total | Position |
|---|---|---|---|--|-------|----------|
|  | | 20 | 20 | 20 | 60 | 1 |
|  | 0 | | 8 | 4 | 12 | 4 |
|  | 2 | 14 | | 11 | 27 | 3 |
|  | 0 | 18 | 15 | | 33 | 2 |

MEN'S OVER 50 REPORT

After a long season with undoubted injuries and age concerns the experienced squad of Captain Darren Withey, Peter Gunter, Murray Scott, Marc Aldridge, Ray Burke & Peter Lonsdale made their excursion to Aberdeen from various parts of the country to defend our O50 Masters Champions title. Five counties (Buckinghamshire, Middlesex, Surrey, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, and Durham & Cleveland) were sending their finest to take on their counterparts from Scotland, Ireland & Wales.

After a brief team talk and photo shoot at our venue for the weekend, Aberdeen Squash Club, the team took on Ireland in the first match on Friday. The team of Gunter, Scott, Aldridge, Withey and Burke whitewashed our apprehensive opponents. Whilst we were dishing out 3/0 wins Lonsdale decided to put in a 20 minute jog around the streets of Aberdeen, preparation for his match on Saturday, but it turned into a 1hr 20 minute slog! Lonsdale's only explanation of why he wasn't there to support his team mates in their first match was "I got lost". Luckily his support wasn't needed but team thanked him for thinking about them at least. After an evening meal at the club we decided on a quiet drink in the bar which ended up being an 8 pint night cap (NB all other teams had gone to bed including Scotland & Thompson).

One would assume there would be at least a couple of heavy heads in the morning but this certainly did not show in their performances as Gunter, Scott, Aldridge, Withey & Lonsdale all turned in another set of 3/0 wins to secure a 5/0 win against Wales. Wales had beaten Scotland the previous day but the England boys were all in very good form and the team had still not dropped a game in two matches.

A light lunch followed the Welsh match before gearing up to play hosts Scotland who were plagued by injuries. Losing Carter & Thompson in consecutive matches meant they were struggling to field a team capable of attempting to stop our final push to be champions. Apart from a lack lustre Burke at 5, who had to come back from 2-0 down to win, Gunter, Scott, Aldridge & Lonsdale ripped through their top order. A brilliant effort from all the players and nearly faultless result sheet.



The good news for England continued to come from the other courts as well, as both Women's O50 & Men's O70 teams were victorious and England had recorded a full set of impressive results in Scotland.

The presentation was due to start at the club at 7.30-8.00 but with many watching the English FA Cup Final it was put on hold for a short while. This only gave Burke more time to conduct his now familiar walk to bar, returning with another round of Southern Comfort (Glen would have been proud). After a splendid roast beef dinner, the awards were handed out to those heroic O70 guys, delightful O50 ladies and alcohol fuelled O50 men.

While putting in committed and determined performances on the courts my team also worked very hard all weekend off court to make my captaincy as hard as possible! Although I have a very successful bunch of players they are extremely scruffy with a few turning up in England tracksuits from 70's. Captain's advice - stop living in the past guys and get yourself some great kit from Andy at iProsports. I headed off to Aberdeen confident that I was well organised for the weekend, this being my first year as captain, but the trophy became a long standing joke throughout the 2 days and by the end of the dinner everyone had a little laugh at my expense. Basically as David Gray had been the caretaker of the trophy since our win last year I had asked him to arrange a courier to get the trophy to the club from his home in Cumbria by Friday. So there I was asking everyone from manager, organiser, bar staff, in fact anyone who cared to listen if they knew of its whereabouts. It started to take on massive importance as the hours went by and constant texting to Gray himself did not provide any answers. All the while I am getting unnecessary grief from my so called team mates about my lack of organisation and then I receive a text explaining the courier has been involved in an accident and they won't be able to get it to the club

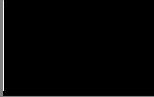
and to top it all off there is damage to the trophy. The (now very annoying) team mates are starting to get even more enjoyment about the stress this is causing me and I have to explain to the organisers. Whilst everyone else is picking up their trophies we have a replacement trophy - a mug donated by Scottish Squash. Whilst receiving this and photos being taken my team are brandishing the original trophy behind me and then I realised, eventually, they were all in on it. Very funny and thanks team and all who knew about this – a great wind up and don't worry I don't bear grudges! However, I will remember.

Seriously a big thank you to every member of my team for their willingness to turn out and contribute to a successful and enjoyable international. Congratulations to all the other England players and commiserations to the Welsh, Irish and Scottish teams.

Also big thanks to Scottish Squash & Aberdeen squash club for hosting the event, along with all the organisers, referees, markers and bar staff for keeping the drinks flowing, and thanks also to all the supporters and players for organising a DIY disco.

Darren Withey (Captain)

MEN'S OVER 70 RESULTS SUMMARY

| Team |  |  |  |  | Total | Position |
|---|---|---|---|--|-------|----------|
|  |  | 17 | 20 | 20 | 57 | 1 |
|  | 6 |  | 17 | 9 | 32 | 2 |
|  | 2 | 8 |  | 18 | 28 | 3 |
|  | 1 | 14 | 7 |  | 22 | 4 |

MEN'S OVER 70 REPORT



Monday 1900 hrs

Having just arrived home from our 944 mile round trip in the car to Aberdeen and back, not sure that I will be repeating this exercise. I am now in a position to present the O70's report.

Aberdeen SC, despite the entry on our website that next year's Scottish venue is Glasgow, firmly believe that it will be there again in 2017. It has to be said that that apartments at The Spire Development were superb and so close to the club.

So to the squash. I suspect that the O70's squad was as strong, if not stronger as any other that I have had the pleasure of playing with since my first Home International in 1998. I was pretty confident then, of retaining the Trophy and of never having been on the losing side.

We/I had tagged Scotland as being the possible main contenders. On the surface Ireland's No2 last year was at No1 this, with not a very different team, so it came to be a bit of a surprise to find England down 2-0 after the first 2 strings. I have never seen Ireland's brigade put up such a challenge. Firstly, Brian Hardcastle's 7-2 lead, in the first game, subsided when the wheels fell off, into a 3-1 defeat. You would also put money on Mighty Mo Clemson to deliver the goods but Ciaran Roach played superbly to cause an upset. Mike has recently had an unsuccessful cataract operation and it looked obvious that he was having difficulty picking up some of the high balls. Mike ended up having the most arduous weekend, also having to work hard to beat Brian Phillips on Saturday morning and Ken Reid on Saturday afternoon. One of the Scottish team though did suggest that Ken should have been their No1 not 3. But then again MC loves it.

However back to Friday and a 2-0 deficit. Rod Boswell restored hope with a convincing win over Frank Fahey and the captain sorted out Clive Gilmour – who had in a previous Scottish encounter in an earlier age group, had had a 2-0 lead only to lose – which he obviously remembered - not this time though – a comfortable 3-0 for the captain. This was followed by another 3-0 from the dependable hard man from Berkshire, Chris Ansell, to restore order in the camp and another 3-0 win for an overall 3-2 score line against Ireland – Phew – relief

We were not to let it slip any more though. On Saturday morning Brian Hardcastle made up for his disappointment on Friday, by subduing Harry Barnard and then Mike Clemson managed to overcome an inspired Brian Phillips – still a quality player, but even further past the sell by date of MC, a mere 73 coming up 74 in August. Dave Hardern back on the trail, using his nous and trickery, made short work of Garry Williams and the 2 dependables Boswell and Ansell both won their games 3-0.



It was Rod Boswell's chance to take revenge of his Closed defeat, when he was not up to full fitness, against Wales's Geoff Trenchard. This time the 2-0 lead went on to be 3-0 win not a 3-2 defeat.

Whilst all this was happening Ireland took over the mantle of second favourites, surprisingly beating Scotland when all seemed lost and 2-1 and 2-0 down in the fourth string match.

Wales then surprising beat Ireland on Saturday afternoon thanks to Garry Williams taking out Clive Gilmour in the latter's second 5 setter of the day.

I had not bothered to work out what we needed to do against Scotland, I was confident I would not need to. As already mentioned only Ken Reid offered any opposition the rest of the squad all having comfortable 3-0's.

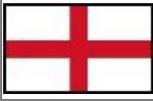
Thanks to Aberdeen Squash Club who showed how to do it – all games had markers – well done Aberdeen. There were handy match sheets that simplified the process of getting information to BB and it was also on their Twitter link. The food supplied by Aberdeen SC and the caterers in the evening was excellent. ½ bottle of wine for each guest on the table was also a nice touch.

Thanks to George Tierney the match referee, his team of referees and Blair McKenzie, ASRC club president, and his staff for all their help. Also the Spire Organisation for their superb accommodation.

Adrian Wright (Captain)

[Note MO70's cup will be held by Rodney Boswell for the year]

WOMEN'S OVER 50 RESULTS SUMMARY

| Team |  |  |  |  | Total | Position |
|---|---|---|---|--|-------|----------|
|  | | 20 | 19 | 20 | 59 | 1 |
|  | 2 | | 4 | 19 | 25 | 3 |
|  | 6 | 20 | | 20 | 46 | 2 |
|  | 1 | 6 | 2 | | 9 | 4 |

WOMEN'S OVER 50 REPORT

The Ladies O50's team arrived in Aberdeen without drama, delay or injury crises. We were strong, fit, healthy and raring to go. So then we played, we won and we brought the trophy home - what more can you possibly want to know?!

Ok maybe a little more detail is called for! We met for a pre event team chat, were in high spirits and feeling confident - that is until Mandy sneaked a peek at the opposition team sheets and realised that rumours of the Scots 'going for it' this year were indeed very true. Having won the trophy in 2014 they clearly found a taste for it and had fielded an experienced squad full of quality. Aside from the much capped Mandy Akin, our squad consisted of 2 'newbies' and 3 players with less than 10 caps between them. England v Scotland, on Scottish soil, was the last match and scheduled for Saturday afternoon. Prior to that, and to be in with the chance to fight for the trophy, we needed to equal the Scots results against both the Welsh and Irish.

First up was the fixture v Ireland who only had 2 travelling players. The Scots, with a surplus of players on their home turf, thoughtfully made up the numbers to ensure everyone had their quota of games - a gesture appreciated by all. The match of the evening has to go to Shelly who, after literally not moving for the first half of the game, found her stride and ended up playing a well contested match and recording a close 3-2 win. The rest of the team followed up with solid wins and we were able to relax a little and enjoy dinner. Wary of the testing fixtures ahead however, we left at a reasonable hour and without over imbibing. I know, I know, very dull, but very necessary!

Saturday morning saw us take on the Welsh and a couple of potentially tricky fixtures lay in store. Fortunately, Shelly started moving from point 1 this time and put in a good performance to secure a 3-0 win. I was on next against the, ever tricky, Lynne Davis. Another solid performance and another 3-0 win started to fuel team confidence. The 1st string clash saw Rose take on the silky skills possessed by Sian Johnson and, the more Rose limited Sians options, the more vocal Sian became - so much so that the on court banter was almost as entertaining as the squash! Rose took the match after winning a third game tie break to give us an unassailable 3-0 lead so 'all' that remained in this fixture was for us to get two more wins and match the Scots result v Wales. 4th string Isobel, was making her first appearance in an England shirt for '*\$!*:' number of years, started nervously. And whilst not putting in the performance of her life she played well enough to notch up the win and extend our lead to 4-0. So, no pressure then Mandy, we just need you to follow suit please - and reliable as ever, she did just that. With the Scotland and England teams equal on points we moved onto the final challenge - Scotland!

This was always going to be a tough fixture and there was very real uncertainty regarding the outcome. Such was the strength of the Scots team they could afford to leave Moira Atkinson out!

The fixture started with Isobel, now playing 5th string, against the experience and quality of Sue Strachan. This was an excellent match enjoyed by all the many spectators, with the possible exception of Isobel's husband Tony who was nervous enough for all the squad and played every single point with her from the balcony! Isobel put in a sterling performance and pushed Sue all the way before just losing out in the 5th - she was always coming from behind and in the end, couldn't quite turn the tables. First blood to Scotland! I was up next against Ashley Mears. Making an unusually strong start I won a comfortable first game and was able to follow it up with a similar performance in the 2nd. Cruising in the third at 7-2 up, when my forehand inexplicably went AWOL as four consecutive volleys went in the tin, another hit the floor, and another the ceiling. Game to the Scots! Fortunately, my forehand returned in the 4th game and with only 1 point dropped I won the match to tie the fixture at one rubber each.

Rose v Fiona McLean were next up in a repeat of their semi-final clash at the Nationals. Rose started superbly, getting her tactics spot on and dictating much of the play. However, the 'in form' Fiona wasn't about to let Rose have it all her own way and went through a real purple patch in the second to take a 7-3 lead and put Rose under considerable pressure. Rose, however, stuck to her game plan and played with composure to firstly level the score and then go on to take the game. The 3rd game was another hard fought encounter but again, Rose was triumphant and the win nudged the England team into a 2-1 lead.

With nerves still jangling, Hilary went on to play her first competitive England fixture against the immensely experienced Pauline Douglas. And my goodness what a tussle they had! Pauline playing to keep her country's hopes alive and Hilary desperately trying to seal an England victory. The match was full of drama, with the scoreline swinging back and forth and a blood injury to Pauline - well you have to balance out the Scottish refs decision making somehow! An unbelievably spirited performance by Hilary saw her come back from losing the first game to level at one all, only to lose an agonising third game 9-10 to put her 1 - 2 down. Scottish spirits were high, their supporters vocal and even their Twitter feed reported optimism of winning (Take a look at @AberdeenSRC's Tweets: <https://twitter.com/AberdeenSRC/status/734006943510040576?s=09>) Hilary, however, was not to be put off by any of this nonsense. Determined that this was hers for the taking she won the 4th convincingly. Once again into a decider and with tension levels still rising there was all to play for. Another keenly contested game saw Hilary edge ahead and quieten the locals. She forged her way to match point, but Pauline is a fighter and wasn't about to roll over - many hand in/hand outs followed and at the fifth time of asking Hilary was finally able to seal the match and with it a well-deserved England victory. Relief in the camp was palpable and I don't think anyone felt it more so than Hilary's exhausted husband Spence who, despite limited knowledge of the game, understood and felt the tension all too well!

This just left Mandy to play out a dead rubber at second string. This should have been an uneventful match but unfortunately it ended with concern. Mandy did win with some ease, but worryingly, twisted her knee just a few points from the end. This leaves her a very real doubt for the British Open, which is obviously very unfortunate for her but will also be a massive loss to the event. Best wishes for a full and speedy recovery Mandy. Time for celebrating! Following a short champagne celebration, we made our way to the squash club for the presentation dinner where we were treated to a superb meal - finding wine on the tables was also a very welcome treat. Thankyou ASRC!

Having been assured that the Men's Captain would speak on behalf of all 3 winning England teams, I set to the task of drinking the aforementioned wine. I sat back and relaxed as a humorous and respectful speech was duly delivered. I then giggled my way through the excellent wind up that followed, regarding the 'lost' MO50's trophy - much frivolity and laughter all round! Then, whilst quaffing another glass of the red stuff, it became apparent that the wind up over the men's 50's trophy was not the only one of the evening and I was dragged up to 'say a few words', all in the name of equality! Quite what garbage came out of my mouth I really don't recall but I send a heartfelt apology for anything inappropriate I might have uttered! Fortunately for a few, I don't bear grudges although such was my embarrassment at not being prepared, I am considering making an exception in this case! We're a resourceful bunch and the absence of a disco did not deter us from dancing the night away! The room was commandeered, a mobile device got hooked up to the speaker and music blared out courtesy of Spotify. We wanted and fully deserved the right to party - and so we did!

Reading this you'd never believe I could be lost for words! So just a couple of footnotes and thank you's to finish and that's me done!

A massive thankyou to my team for being fantastic in both the build up and throughout the event. You made the role so easy and I was very proud to be Captain of such a fabulous squad. Brilliant team spirit with a willingness to have fun and win - we excelled at both!

Many thanks to our travelling supporters who were first class. Special mentions go to Spence Kenyon for his unassuming assistance in the admin, organisation and photo department. Tony Smith who ably supported our matches, willing and encouraging the team to victory. Albert Akin for leading the way and showing us how it's done on the dance floor! And of course Shelly's partner Bobby for both his support and post match injury assessment

Thanks to those England guys who actually managed to make it through to the other side of the bar and cheer us on, especially during our battle with Scotland - very much appreciated! And well done to you and your teams on your success.

Scottish squash, Aberdeen squash club, organisers and referees also deserve a big round of applause for putting on a hugely successful, stress free event.

Finally, and equally importantly, a big thankyou goes out to all our opposition who provided serious competition amongst the fun and banter. These events are absolutely brilliant and it's a privilege to be part of them - without your full participation they would not be possible. Thank you and I look forward to next year!

Rachel Woolford (Captain)