

2018 MASTER HOME INTERNATIONAL IRELAND

Event Dates:	Friday 4 th - Saturday 5 th May 2018		
Address:	Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club, Dublin		
England Teams:	Men's O50	Men's O70	Women's O50
	Steve McLoughlin (Captain) Andrew Cross Steve Dodridge Cliff Martindale Eamonn Price David Youngs	Martin Pearse (Captain) Rodney Boswell Martin Day Barry Featherstone Jack Halford Aubrey Waddy	Rachel Woolford (Captain) Beverley Brockway Kay Fallows Hilary Kenyon Isobel Smith Shelley Walsh

MENS OVER 50 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		19	20	20	59	1
	5		9	20	34	2
	4	14		9	27	3
	1	4	14		19	4

MENS OVER 50 REPORT



Travelling up to Heathrow on a beautiful Friday morning, I couldn't help thinking of a similar weekend several years ago, making the same journey to Dublin with such high hopes. Sadly, it ended in disaster and inglorious defeat, the English sent home badly beaten by the Scots led by Wee Frankie (AKA William Wallace), supported by his fellow marauders, several hundred years of hurt brought to bear and duly unleashed on the unsuspecting captain (me) and my band of merry men:

Glen 'I'm injured captain and can't play didn't I tell you?' Ragou

Simon 'I'm travelling reserve – but have the flu' Street

Andy 'My knees are just bone on bone please don't drugs test me' Murray

Dave 'I'm scared of Wee Frankie' Youngs

and finally, John 'I'll win whatever' Hanson.

With those scars still raw, and being captain again (no one else wanted the job ok?) I was determined to not let the same thing happen and looking through my team sheet, I was relatively happy with what I saw:

Me (Older, definitely wiser, possibly slightly slower)

Dave 'Still scared of Wee Frankie but thank god he's not playing' Youngs

Andy 'Must make it back to the correct hotel' Cross

Eamonn 'For god's sake I'm nearly 55' Price

Cliff 'Ok I haven't played for two months with a bad knee but hey it doesn't feel too bad' Martindale

Steve Doddie 'Last man in buys all the drinks' Dodridge

And last but not least:

Andy 'I've broken my metatarsal, please get a reserve, no don't, yes do, no don't, yes do' Murray.

For those with an A* in mathematics, yes we took seven players – a ploy to rest and rotate? No, Muppet Muzza broke a toe, didn't want to play, then did - Too late Doddie was in faster than a rat up a drainpipe, even faster than Muzza can drink a pint of Guinness. So Muzza was named entertainments officer – possibly not by best move, but far from my worst!

I met Doddie at terminal 5, an uneventful hour and a half later in economy (had to be mentioned because everyone assumes I travel in 1st class, not true, I rarely travel in 1st class, business is much more cost effective) and we are on the airbus heading for the Mespil hotel. A moment of panic as Vice-captain Dave Youngs rings to tell me I'm due at the captain's meeting at 15:30, turns out it is really 16:30, (thanks Dave!) best I can do is tell Dave to start without me – normal play resumed in my world....

We get to the hotel, – I'm sharing with Andy C, who I find happily already installed, enjoying the mini bar - kidding. Just relaxing pre-photos, wondering which knobbly knee has a photogenic side....

Most of the team seem to be still at the hotel, so I manage to round them up, and we head off to the Fitzwilliam. As usual we try to get in through the rear entrance, no joy there, so amid much grumbling we make the longer walk round to the front (200 yards and they are moaning, is this the best England can do?).

Captains meeting – The highlight here being the strict instructions to not use mobile phones except in the very limited areas well marked. So basically, not in any of the bars, or outside the courts, or anywhere really, and if caught by members it will be curtains.

Photos out of the way (Andy C deciding that neither of his knees should be in the shot) it's down to business. 1st match up Ireland, on paper probably the strongest out of the other nations, led by Andre 'Legend' Maur.

1st match on Doddie at 5, all going well – in the knock up, Dave and I looking on admiring the old style kit we've gone back to (oh dear no one told Eamonn) then blow me, we hear a mobile phone, we look round and World's best supporter Chris 'smiling assassin' Langford is on the phone! Was he at the briefing? Yes he was. Was he listening? Clearly not! More on Chris and his phone later....

Thankfully we put points on the board at 5, 3, 4, thanks to Doddie, Cliff (who's knee seems to be ok!) and terminator Eamonn, so the match is won, but then it gets interesting. Normally when Dave plays we are all entranced by the spectacle and the full repertoire of shots – from our positions anywhere but near the ball, but this time he is surpassed by Andre the legend, who unleashes a ferocious array of tins, out of court shots and unbelievably bad movement to leave us all open mouthed – especially Dave with a 10-minute victory having barely broken sweat. I can only say that having lost to Andre before, he clearly was saving himself tactically for the rest of the weekend.

Then one of the matches of the weekend, Andy 'the knee' C vs Eoin, a brilliant 5 setter which Eoin just clinched. Andy as instructed by the captain accepted the defeat with good grace, but I have to say more than a wry glance at one of the volunteer referees – Surely not robbed by dodgy marking? Unheard of in squash....

So a great start 4 1, and after a couple of beers in the players bar, the squad (yes all 8 – keep up) retired to the main dining room for the post-match meal, not much to report there other than Eamonn having at least two main courses and possibly three desserts.

Oh, nearly forgot, by this stage entertainments manager Andy M and Chris had tucked in to seven beers already....

As captain I always think it important to conduct the post-match warm down and review away from the squash environment, it can aid in frank and open discussions on performance, and bring fresh ideas to the forefront, so yes we dumped the kit at the hotel and retired to the 'bar on the corner'. Needless to say we all aired our views

over a Guinness or two, the main talking point being Andy C and the marking. He was outvoted 7 to 1 in favour of the ref, and told to get over it – that would remain to be seen!

As I retired to my room at around 1:15am I can confirm that I saw cliff and Andy M go into their room, I can't confirm whether they went out again you will have to ask them. I did look back a little anxiously realizing that I had let Cliff off from playing in the morning, and with Muzza not playing anyway....

Saturday morning dawned all bright and sunny, albeit a little on the dehydrated side. A swift breakfast with Dave, Chris and Doddie – The latter not eating as on 1st at 09:30, but making sure the hotel buffet breaky wouldn't close before he got back at 10:30 after his match - overconfident or just good planning? No sign of Cliff, Andy M, Eamonn or Andy C – having a lie in, still no doubt thinking about the ref...

Over to the club. Scotland were the opponents, today's line up. Doddie at 5, Eamonn at 4, Yours truly finally donning his oversized kit at 3, Andy C at 2 and Dave at 1. Another great start from the lower order, and this time the big match was at 1, where our maestro vs Mike Ramsay was anything but straightforward. Indeed at 2 1 down and 5 0 down it was looking bleak for Norfolk's finest, but somehow as he very often does, Dave found enough of his guile, skill and one or two downright flukes to pull it round into a 3 2 win. I am going to say that possibly the warm up vs the legend the night before was not the best preparation, or maybe just maybe we over-analysed it in the bar afterwards, you'll have your own views on that...5 0 to England. One to go!

After a swift toastie and bowl of soup, restart vs Wales at 2pm. But first an update on Chris and his phone. This time being caught in the players bar using it and being told to turn it off – Will he never learn – the youth of today.

By now Muzza and Cliff had re-appeared, I didn't ask any questions, often it's better not to know!

Cliff swapped in for Doddie who took a well earned rest, but looked a little worried about surviving an afternoon with the entertainments manager and no match to play....

This match went relatively smoothly, and the team came away with a fine 5 0 victory. I was possibly the most concerned coming on court against Nick Jones, a canny operator who had taken me to a close 4 games at the Nationals, this time I tried a new tactic – concentrating, this appeared to throw him completely and I was chuffed to get Nick off court with a 3 0 under my belt.

So the squash was over. Most of my captaincy duties were done:

Team briefings

Putting in team orders

Handing out food vouchers – Which in my team's case was a bit like an episode of the walking dead (It will be on YouTube for those who haven't seen it).

Getting players to matches – on the right courts

Team talks – 15 in all, obviously including talking to myself as it appears when the captain is playing, no one else worries about him (sob), all in a day's work.

But in reality we all know most of the work was still to be done – Getting the team to the evening reception relatively sober – not easy with Muzza in your team. Trying to stay focused during the meal and avoid Jon Gliddon's approach last year (Only hearsay!) by getting leathered before the speech.

Finally, attempting to keep the group together when some want a cup of Horlicks and an early night, whereas others want something entirely different!

5pm:

Sitting outside on the Fitzwilliam terrace in the gorgeous sunshine with a couple of cold beers with the full squad was a big highlight. A few jokes were going around. The marking was mentioned again, with the same result.

(Sorry Andy C). The virtues of playing squash in shorts with pockets were discussed, the consensus being that it is dangerous, and that no retailer/supplier of sports clothing should consider supplying such garments – And I believe there was a final joke about a jockey and a horse, but I can't remember the punchline.

This was all great until Alison facetimed me from Singapore, just to make sure all was well. I'm not sure she was convinced by the video around the table of such a motley crew, possibly another sleepless night for her....

Dinner began at 19:30, and miraculously we all arrived on time as a group, fully kitted out, some with new ties, some with old ties, and yes we actually talked about which was better, this squad had no more street cred to lose. The tab was replenished and back in business. We took our places at our table – A quick word to Martin P, don't steal our table again! Funnily enough this worked out much better as we had the very great pleasure of joining the England ladies fresh from their own victories. The ladies were far more upmarket and had been dipping in to champagne early doors, but we took that one on the chin, and frankly it would probably be wasted on my lot.

We enjoyed a great dinner, great chat, and although I was extremely nervous about doing the men's speech it didn't stop me having a fab time, thanks mainly to Dave Y for keeping tabs on my lager and wine allowance, and the ladies for consciously keeping me away from thinking too much about the speech.

The order for the speeches generally goes as follows, the Fitzwilliam team do their bit, then the men's O70s, then the ladies O50s then the men's O50s, so I had plenty of time to learn from their mistakes and come out with a belter to finish.

Sadly, as most now know, I was a nervous wreck, having managed in my whole work and playing career to have avoided any speeches of any length and consequence at any time! So first up was Kieran. To my growing horror he proceeded to charm the pants off everyone, and I've honestly never seen so many people laugh so much and for so long! How do you follow that?!

Then as normal, Martin P gave a polished performance worthy of an England Cricket Captain, followed by Rachel who did a fab job of thanking everyone that I wanted to thank, leaving me with nothing to work with!

Suffice to say, I did my best, with the crew at my side. It may not have been an epic, it may not have had people rolling in the aisles, but I went with the theory that by then most people were bored with speeches and would be relieved once it was over – It appeared the approach worked to a certain degree. Oh and I did thank the refs, especially the one that Andy was still moaning about!

At this point my heartfelt thanks go out to the ladies from every team that took the time to come over and tell me that I did a great job, they may not have meant it but I don't care, it made my year, thank you ladies! (Special thanks to Kay for muttering 'They say that every year' just loud enough!

The rest of the evening went pretty much as expected, over to the bar at the Fitzwilliam, some great chat with everyone, no dancing this year that I noticed from the squad, so Eamonn came home with his shirt intact. Then despite all efforts, a splinter group of Doddie, Cliff, Muzza and Andy C disappeared to town, leaving myself and Eamonn to pick up the pieces. Dave and Chris made a great tactical withdrawal to escape the mayhem, and I thought I'd done the same only to get dragged into town by Eamonn to find the others. It all gets hazy at this point and should probably remain so...

Sunday morning dawned bright and far too early, but after a swift breakfast and swifter exit to the airport for a midday flight, another fantastic home internationals weekend was over. Only slightly marred by passing the business section of my BA flight and seeing a certain member of the Welsh team sitting up there – Outrageous!

As I drove back from Heathrow, a few last thoughts on the weekend:

Did Muzza ever get his phone back? (Lost in a bar)

Did Dave remember where he left our trophies at the Fitzwilliam? (Somewhere near the kitchen) And we will ever get them back?

Is Andy Cross still mad at the ref – Let it go Andy!

Does Andy Cross regret suggesting he may put himself forward as captain next year? – Yes, and he has the trophy already!

What will the credit card bill show next month? Oh dear

Has Chris got any battery power left on his phone?

See you all in Charlottesville for more fun and frolics at the Worlds in July/August...

Stephen McLoughlin

Team Captain

MENS OVER 70 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		19	16	20	55	1
	5		7	19	31	3
	7	18		20	45	2
	1	3	4		8	4

MENS OVER 70 REPORT



The Mens O70 Team eventually arrived in Dublin but not before Rod Boswell, in forgetting his memory tablet he takes daily, went through Immigration and Customs and then remembered what he was actually in Dublin for. He informs me it is quite a struggle to get back inside the airport when you want to collect your forgotten squash bag

rotating aimlessly on Stand 9 ...

So, on a boiling hot day, orders were fixed and then, as usual, moved around – an Irish plea in this case.

Your Captain was first on, 21 years to the day when we played the first ever Over 50 Internationals at my old Club, Squash Leicester. He was up against an artist in the new breed of PAR players, the one-shot rally merchant: one shot, tin or nick, tin or nick. When the one ball does eventually pass the service line, it is usually a winner because by that stage you automatically are yards forward. Harry Cullen, from Belfast, having had game ball, was unlucky to lose the first, 23-25 (is this the record?). He then gained a 2/1 lead easily. In the end MCP did his usual and won 3/2.

Aubrey Waddy, next on, was in no mood for any presents on court and dispatched Frank Fahey 17/15 15/3 15/3 and then Barry Featherstone at 1, sealed the match in similar fashion with Seamus Daly, 3/0, the latter a dab drop expert.

Newcomer Martin Day, seemed unperturbed at the enormity of the occasion, a Yorkshireman playing at the hallowed Fitzwilliam Club, and beat Irish Captain Ciaran Roche, 15/6 16/14 15/12. Rod Boswell, having had to wait hours since his recall into the airport, was winning easily with Jonny Donovan, 2/0 and 8/3 but suddenly hit a brick wall, physically and mentally and went down 12/15 in the fifth, a shock but a very happy one for Mr Donovan.

Next up was Scotland and after one shot Ken aka Ken Reid had stormed into an early lead against Martin Day, the latter cleverly stopped serving hard as every one went straight into the nick. High and low serves changed the dynamic totally, a sea change. 5/10 became 15/10 15/6 15/8.

Amazingly at 3, 82 year old Tom Kana (a cert for the British Open 80+ if he entered it) did exactly the same, serve, nick, nick, serve and took Aubrey Waddy totally unawares winning 15/13. The latter though, writes books about squash and taught himself very quickly to not put the ball on Mr Kane's racket. 3/1 to the Author.

Finally, the match Ian Ross, the Scottish no 1, a very solid performer, had been waiting for. Against his old rival, Barry Featherstone. This years match total was 2-2 and both are travelling to Charlottesville for The World. However, there, the scoring is to 11, a totally different game. Initially Ross won the first and then Featherstone's pace increased as he dialled in his 'hit it harder' switch. But Ross has an unflappable temperament and copes admirably under pressure. So it was that he took the fourth and at 12/12 in the decider, played three winners to secure the win and keep Scotland alive.

Not to be because Jack Halford, yet to make his debut, was too strong for Alistair McMechan from deepest Bromley in Kent. Jack buzzed around the court and never looked like losing. 3/0 to Jack and the match to England 3/1.

Just as well because Rodney Boswell at 2 was completely out of sorts, very unusual against the quick and hard hitting newcomer George Stirrat, brand new to Masters Squash at the age of 70 (how many others are stuck away on a dusty court?)

George sneaked the crucial second 16/14 and powered through the third to make the match score 3/2.

The Welsh decider saw Martin Pearse, Aubrey Waddy and Jack Halford won easily and Barry Featherstone 3/1 with Steve Evans, formerly Cornwall and now Brittany. And Bazzar came back to life with a 15/10 15/10 15/11 win over Duncan Jones England 5/0 and winners yet again.

The after match festivities at Fitzwilliam were lively and Jack Halford's duo on the dance floor with 20 years younger Beverley Brockway, showing amazing balance on 15 inch heels, was a Strictly Come Jiving highlight! Jack wasn't wearing his, so heads were going up and down following the action.....



Ciaran Roche and Patrick Murray, who showcased the event at Fitzwilliam, are to be congratulated, as are all the markers, especially William and Frank.

For 2019 the Irish Squash Federation have moved the Home Internationals to a new venue, Galway Lawn and Tennis & Squash. Having played there many times, it is a superb club with magnificent surroundings, right on the Wild Atlantic Way and will no doubt be a wonderful venue. I suggest anyone expecting to play takes their car as there will be a 3 day package at the hotel after the event for players who wish to stay on and see that wonderful part of Eire, just before, ummm, Brexit ... !!

Martin Pearse
Team Captain

WOMENS OVER 50 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		20	19	16	55	1
	0		0	5	5	4
	7	20		16	43	2
	6	20	6		32	3

WOMENS OVER 50 REPORT



The Ladies o50's team had a slightly different look to it with Kay and Isobel returning to England duty and Bev Brockway making her debut.

Friday started nervously with news from the mainland being that the plane Hils & Shelly were due to fly in on had a technical problem and there was no replacement for the 'faulty part' With the next scheduled flight being fully

booked they would need to wait for a different plane to fly in from Palma - don't worry Ryanair, I'm sure a 5.5hr delay won't cause any angst at all!!

Hils & Shelly did eventually arrive and made a dash directly to the courts. Then courtesy of a less than punctual start by Irish administration, they had time for a quick hit and cup of coffee. Admin complete and play finally started shortly after 6pm. England were dominant and played out a 5-0 victory but not before an unfortunate incident occurred when Joan Gorhery ran into Hils racket catching her eye on route. Unable to continue she conceded and went off to get it checked out. Thankfully there was no serious damage, but significant bruising had appeared by the following morning.

A relatively early night was in order as play was scheduled for 9.30am and our opponents were our auld enemy - the Scots. As always, they provided strong opposition and it's hard to pick the match of the fixture. Hils v Pauline Douglas playing at 3rd string was, as previously, a very tense 5 setter which could have gone either way. It was, however, Pauline's turn on this occasion and she just edged it to keep the Scots in contention. Wins from Isobel, Bev and Rachel won the tie for England before Kay, at 2nd string, stepped on court against the experienced Sue Strachan where another 5-set battle ensued. Sue went 2-1 up but Kay fought hard to draw level at 2 all. At this stage it was anyone's match. Kay, however, had a secret weapon and waited until the 5th before revealing her 'leisure centre boast' - not a shot for the purist and one that Sue definitely did not appreciate! However, she played 3 and won 3 so who are we to criticise! With Kay coming through that battle we rolled out 4-1 winners, making it sound easier than it was!

The afternoon fixture saw us take on a strengthened Welsh team with Helen Barnard coming in at the top of their order. Shelly & Hils had won their matches at 5 & 3 respectively before I took to the court with Helen. Stuck out on the far end court, the walls were dripping with moisture and floorboards were dead, which led to some interesting play for both of us. Numerous times the balls behaved as tho it had burst, boasts became an absolute lottery and when the ball hit a dodgy floorboard it just didn't bounce. Nonetheless we had a humdinger of a match and after taking an early lead in the 5th I felt the match was there for the taking. Silly me, I really should know better! I played a couple of sloppy shots which Helen took full advantage to not only equal the score line, but to push ahead and bring home a win for Wales. A great battle Helen and I'm sure we'll have many more! Aware that Kay was up against an inform Sian, the pressure was on Isobel at 4th string to win the tie. She dug deep and duly obliged to give us an unassailable lead. Kay and Sian played out their fixture but unfortunately Kay tweaked a muscle that limited her movement and the experienced Sian quickly picked up on this and fully exploited the situation. With Sian winning her match 3-0, the final score line against the Welsh team was 3-2. The trophy will make its way back to Lancashire in the custody of Kay.



This just left us the Sat evening celebrations and a challenging initiation ritual for Bev, who deserves 100% credit for seeing the it through - not sure many would have even attempted it. Well done Bev!

With presentations and speeches complete we danced the night away celebrating another highly enjoyable and successful weekend. Many thanks to everyone involved; administrators, team Captains, referees, all the players but most especially to my team who I feel honoured to have Captained.

Rachel Woolford
Team Captain