

2018 MASTER HOME INTERNATIONAL WALES

Event Dates:	Friday 20 th - Saturday 21 st Apr 2018		
Address:	Sport Wales National Centre (SWNC), Sophia Gardens, Cardiff, and Cardiff Squash Rackets Club, Ryder Street, Cardiff		
England Teams:	Men's O35	Men's O55	Women's O55
	Alex Preston (Captain) Marcus Hayes Darren Lewis Phil Nightingale Paul Stroud Keith Timms	John Parkes (Captain) Nigel Bacon Martin Greenslade Neil Harrison Nick Peel Gary Raw	Mandy Akin (Captain) Jill Champion Pippa Green Sarah Howlett Karen Hume Lesley Sturgess
	Men's O75		
	Mike Clemson (Captain) Nigel Belle Beverley Boag Adrian Wright		

MENS OVER 35 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		18	20	14	52	1
	6		20	16	42	2
	1	2		2	5	4
	7	12	20		39	3

MENS OVER 35 REPORT

The England O35 team proudly descended onto Cardiff to compete for the 2018 Home Internationals. Comprising the squad was Darren Lewis, Phil Nightingale, Keith Timms, Marcus Hayes, Paul Stroud and myself. Fully kitted out and with a very well represented fan club in tow we were ready for action.

We gathered at the Copthorne Hotel and took a team register, all present and correct except for Phil "I'm going to be a bit late" Nightingale. A quick stop at the Welsh Institute of Sport to pick up the gifts & ties and we arrived at our playing venue for the weekend, Cardiff Squash Club. I believe it to be shrewd captaincy to not submit the team sheet for the first match until I had laid eyes on Phil. Blessed be to god that Phil arrived in time for the team photos.



First match of the weekend was what we believed to be our stiffest test, Ireland. Up first and flying the flag the first of our two debutants, Paul Stroud. Going up against a seasoned international player, Rory Gilligan. After a nervy start Paul found himself 2-0 down and struggling to make an impression on the match. The 3rd game was very hotly contested and Paul had us on the edge of our seats as he took it 12-10. Another brutally close game resulted in the first tie going to Ireland as Paul lost 3-1. Keith Timms but in a solid performance next to level the score at 1-1. Darren Lewis was able to overcome the Irish no1 very quickly with an energy saving performance against a sub par Nigel Peyton. Enter Marcus Hayes who had the opportunity to seize the match for England. At 2-0 up (11/8 11/9) vs Neil Staunton things were looking good, but to his credit Neil fought back into the match convincingly and levelled the match to set up a thrilling 5th game. After an incredibly tight and unpredictable game Marcus "I just wanted to make it interesting" Hayes prevailed. To close out the match our other debutant Phil Nightingale put in a good performance to defeat Niall Rooney 3-0 at no2.

England 4-1 (18-6) Ireland

The next morning, we had the pleasure of playing Scotland which turned out to be a straight forward affair everyone winning 3-0 except for myself, winning 3-1 at no4. Paul Stroud confidently picked up his first win in the England shirt.

England 5-0 (20-1) Scotland

This set up an enticing encounter with the home nation, Wales, who had just had an epic contested 3-2 defeat to Ireland. However, Wales brought in the extra strength of Nic Birt at no1 against us, so there were going to be difficult to beat. Due to the Wales vs Ireland match running so far over time

we agreed to adapt the match playing order to accommodate some amount of rest for all the players. Marcus Hayes led the charge on the Cardiff Squash Club show court. His performance was a display of absolutely flawless perfection and he came out the victor against Andrew Neal who was undefeated until he encountered Marcus (11/3 11/5 11/2). Paul Stroud came next and put in a similarly convincing victory against Jon Davies (11/7 11/6 11/9). The victory line was in sight but we weren't there yet. Two professionals contested the no2 match, Phil Nightingale vs Greg Tippings. In a closely fought affair with perhaps a clash of styles, resulted in lots of niggles (defined as, slight but persistent annoyance, discomfort, or anxiety) throughout the match. Greg Tippings won through 3-0 to put Wales right back in the picture. Darren Lewis was therefore handed the opportunity to seal the victory for England vs Nic Birt. Both players were in scintillating form which produced the highest standard match seen all weekend. Darren and England were looking very good at 2-0 up but Nic pulled one back with fantastic shot making and retrieving on display. A tense 4th resulted in Darren taking it by the finest of margins 12/10, and with that the championship.

England 3-2 (14-7) Wales

The social side of the weekend was also fantastic, especially the presentation dinner. Hat tip to the Scotland team who thrashed us at a boat race on the stage at the presentation. I should mention that we had to substitute in Gary Raw the England O55 no1 who was widely accepted as the weak link in our drinking team. Much thanks are due to the centralised and local organisers of the event, which again was fantastic.

Honoured to be captain,

Alex Preston
Team Captain

MENS OVER 55 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		19	20	20	59	1
	3		6	6	15	4
	5	17		8	30	3
	4	18	16		38	2

MENS OVER 55 REPORT



Picture the scene-Nationals, Manchester 2018-a gruelling 66 minute, 5 set match, in which I was 2-0 up, had 4 match balls, then promptly lost it. As you can imagine I was gutted, but shortly afterwards I was given the honour of being named England O55's Captain for this year's Internationals-made up for the loss somewhat!!

Whilst still at the tournament, I asked Mark Woodliffe if he would be available to play for the team and was disappointed to hear he had other commitments for that weekend. Did this mean that after 31 years the Edinburgh Quaich would be handed over to another country? Well, certainly not without a fight!

Selections were made and the squad was ready for action- Dave Box, Martin Greenslade, John Parkes, Nigel Bacon, Nick Peel and Gary Raw. Unfortunately, a week away from Internationals, Dave Box had to pull out and reserve Neil Harrison was called in.

So on Friday 20th April, from all areas of the UK, we merged on Sports Wales National Centre, Cardiff, the photographs were a little late as Gary was delayed by 20 minutes. Play began at just after 5pm.

First up was Ireland, but with a delayed flight the order of play had to be changed. Our new caps (congratulations to them!) Nick Peel and Nigel Bacon, were first to play- both showing slight signs of nerves and a few unforced errors in the middle of their games. However, they still proved too strong for their opponents, winning 3-0.

Next on was our number one, Gary Raw who didn't take long to control the game, winning 11/5, 11/5, 11/5.

Martin (Cool Hand) Greenslade was on next against Ireland's number two- I was sure I'd seen this guy before but where? Suddenly I realised that in last year's O55's he had taken a game off the famous Mark Woodliffe. Not having time to warn Martin, he was suddenly down by 2/0. Martin now had to dig deep, playing with much more accuracy and speed, taking the next two games 11/7 11/8. All the hard work pulling back to level the match proved too much for him, so the match ended as a 3-2 loss.

John Parkes, at number 3, finished the tie 3-0.

England 4-Ireland 1.

That was it for Friday's squash- a quick shower and a 5-minute walk to the Cardiff Squash Racket Club for our evening meal. Once fed, back to The Copthorne Hotel for a little liquid refreshment and to discuss the next day's matches.

Saturday began with a full selection of continental or English/Welsh cooked breakfast, then over to the National Sports Centre- a 15-minute drive, provided you don't take a wrong turn!

Scotland next up---

Finding out they had lost to Wales 3-2 and that their number one, Alan Thompson, was not playing, meant that maximum points was the only option for us. So, in came Neil Harrison.

First on court was Nick Peel who, in the first game, took a commanding lead. Then at 6- all he lost his way a little and with a few tetchy shots it ended in an 11/6 loss. A quick chat where he was encouraged not to over-hit the ball and he began to take the ball early, taking charge of the T area, and going on to win the next games 11/6, 11/9, 11/5.

Parkes and Raw made light work of their matches and both took quick 3/0 wins to secure the tie. So 3/0 up and Cool Hand Greenslade was under no pressure, however for a man who is normally as cool as a cucumber, it started to look a little tense as he lost the first game. He hit straight back with

some confident squash to even things up. But once again after losing the third game, and now being 2-1 down, it took Natasha, his partner, to give Martin a few words of encouragement. All I can say is "What's said on tour, stays on tour!!" Needless to say, Martin proceeded to take the 4th and 5th games.

Neil Harrison stepped up to plate to finish the tie, coasting through but in the fourth game the ball came off the edge of his racket and caught his opponent on the head. He was fine, but Neil's nerves were a little shot and he lost the fourth, however the 90 second break between games served him well and he completed the match in his normal style.

England 5-Scotland 0

Back to Cardiff Squash Club for the buffet before the final matches.

Having England and Wales winning both of their matches, it was all to play for!

Nigel Bacon and John Parkes both convincingly winning their matches, only one more needed to win and retain the cup! So it began.....

Next up was Gary Raw against Jon Evans which promised to be a much tougher task, and indeed Jon, playing some very tight squash, took the first 11/5. In the second, the tempo started to increase with both players trying to control the game but never going more than one point ahead. Suddenly at 9-9 Evans pulled his calf, but carried on despite the pain, and finally Gary wins the game 18-16. Jon goes on for the third but concedes the match after losing the game 11-2. Not the best way to win the tie and retain the trophy.



Next on to play was Neil Harrison, and with the trophy already "in the bag", he proceeded to demonstrate a wonderful array of the shots he is famous for, winning 3-2.

Then Finally Martin Greenslade nice and relaxed proceeded to show how the lob and drop game can work effectively and apart from an incident with a key on the court (now known as "Key Gate") he went through to a 3/0 win.

The Edinburgh Quaich was retained and would be safely on its way back to England, so it was time for the presentation, meal and disco. Gary represented the O55's in the Over 35's Boat Race, however I don't think anyone told him that before putting the bottle onto your head you actually have to drink the ENTIRE contents first!!

Nick Peel spent most of the evening.....correction most of the weekend trying to sell his 10 year old Jaguar, starting bids £10. Any offers please contact him!...

One of the highlights for me was Adrian Wright, Over 75's winner, accepting the O55's trophy which he won 20 years previously- how many of us will still be playing (and winning) in another 20 years I wonder?!!

So it just leaves me with a few thanks to give out...

To Mike Workman, Lynne Davies and Co. for all their hard work organising the event.








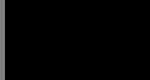
Thanks to Roy Gingell and all referees for such a good job.

To Natasha, our team photographer, and to Nigel Bacon's family for their support.

Well done guys until next time...

John Parkes
Team Captain

MENS OVER 75 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		14	X	14	28	1
	0		X	2	2	3
	X	X		X	X	X
	1	14	X		15	2

MENS OVER 75 REPORT

The Men's Over 75 team came out on top in convincing fashion in the Home Internationals in Cardiff on 20/21 April, beating their Irish and Welsh counterparts 3-0. Nigel Belle and Bev Boag (making his debut) led the way with wins in their respective matches, and Adrian Wright and Mike Clemson both had comfortable victories to seal the wins. Regretfully, Scotland were unable to raise a team, so our third match was against a Welsh Select team assembled to fill the gap, and Mike Clemson had the pleasure of playing fellow Masters Committee member Robert Smith, recruited as an honorary Welshman for the occasion.

WOMENS OVER 55 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		20	20	20	60	1
	1		2	2	5	4
	3	20		20	43	2
	2	20	5		27	3

WOMENS OVER 55 REPORT

So, the challenge was on for England to try and win back the over 55's trophy from the Scots!

For the first time this year, the over 55's ladies team is now a 5 String team, so it felt like we had a good chance as we had good strength and depth in our team.

Friday evening and we kicked off against Ireland at Cardiff Squash Club. First on was Sarah Howlett, who put in a solid performance to give us a 1/0 lead winning her match 3/0. Next on Lesley Sturgess with another solid performance winning 3/0 to give us a 2/0 lead. Next on the captain, Mandy Akin, hoping to clinch the



match for the team. Mandy won the first game 15/3. In the Second the Irish No.1 had other ideas and came back strong with some 'interesting' shots, which the captain struggled with. Second game to Ireland! Mandy regained control in the 3rd and then took the 4th as well and the match 3/1. Karen Hume was next on and put in a very solid performance winning her match 3/0. Finally, at two, Pippa Green with another very solid performance and a 3/0 win.

England 5 Ireland 0

Saturday morning and Scotland! Strengthening our team this morning with Jill Champion slotting in at No. 2, we set off on our mission. It was a difficult match to call as a number of the games could go either way!

Lesley Sturgess kicked us off at No.5, both players looking a little tense in the first game, with the score even throughout, then we were at 14/14! Lesley held her nerve and played two strong points to take the first 16/14. Lesley took control in the second with a solid performance to take the game 15/4. Final game was tight, with some good squash by both players but Lesley dug in and took the third 15/13 to give us a good start.

Next on Pippa Green against Scotland's Eunice Bond. Both players are in the Avon County Team but have never played each other! Some great squash was played in the first game with Pippa just maintaining the lead and taking the first game 15/12. The next two games proved a little too much for Eunice, with Pippa taking control and taking the next two games 15/8 to give us a 2/0 lead.

Next on the captain, Mandy Akin against Fiona McLean, the current over 55's British Open and European Champion, both of which Fiona won 3/2 against Mandy Akin, with Fiona having won the last 3 ties between the pair, therefore being hot favourite to take this one. The captain had other ideas and was determined to change the flow. The first game was tough, every point being chased down by two very quick over 55s! Mandy kept the pressure on with some hard hitting and took the first 15/13. In the second Fiona took the lead and looked strong, but the captain fought back and moved ahead. Fiona seemed to temporarily struggle with the pace and was on the back foot a number of times and was unable to pick up Mandy's drops and trickle boasts, allowing England to take the second game 15/8. Mandy took the lead in the third, 5/1 up but with her usual tenacity Fiona fought back to level the game. Mandy then took control again to take a 12/8 lead, only 3 more points to win the match! Fiona dug deep and started to catch up but Mandy managed to stay ahead finally leading 14/12 and match ball, which she took first time to win 3/0. We were 3/0 up and had beaten Scotland – Phew!

With the pressure off a little, Karen Hume took to the court against a very quick Christina. Karen took control in the first game winning 15/9. In the 2nd Christina was resembling a Whippet with the speed and agility she was showing on the court. Karen was using her power, but Christina was retrieving everything and the game was tight throughout, finally levelling at 14/14, the battle continued with Karen finally taking the second 17/15. In to the third and again they battled point for point, with neither player being able to get much of a lead, again the game levelled at 14/14. Each player in turn had game and match balls a number of times over the next few minutes, but it seemed like neither of them actually wanted to win the game! Eventually at 21/21, with balcony full, as a number of the other teams had joined us to watch the battle, Karen didn't disappoint and managed to take the next two points and the third game 23/21. The final game continued in a similar vein but Karen's power eventually got the better of Christina and she took the fourth game 15/10.

Final game and another historic battle was about to commence between Jill Champion and Pauline Douglas. Last year Pauline won, but how would this end today? This was a dead rubber so this was somewhat a personal battle for both players, with Jill obviously also wanting to claim the game to cement a 5/0 victory for England. Pauline started strong and seemed to have second sight in to where Jill was going to put the ball, wherever Jill put the ball Pauline was there to pick it up and Pauline took the first 15/7. Jill was determined

to level the match and put up a strong performance in the second, taking it 15/12. As expected, this game was never going to be easy! Into the third and the battle continued, with both players covering the court like people half their age, with some great shots being played and the game levelling at 14/14. Pauline's second sight returned and she took the game 16/14. Jill was not out yet and continued to battle with a strong performance and some great drop shots. Pauline was now struggling to read Jill's game (second sight seemed to have gone again – phew). Jill took the fourth 15/8. The fifth continued as before with both players still running like it was the first! Jill managed to keep her nose just in front throughout and finally took the fifth game 15/13.

England 5 Scotland 0

Finally, over to the South Wales National Centre for our final game against Wales. We actually only needed to win one match to pick up the trophy but as usual England wanted to make sure they did it in style by winning as many matches as possible.

Sarah Howlett on first at No. 5, she started strong and played some great lobs and drops to take the first 15/6. Wendy came back strong in the second and Sarah struggled to maintain her lobs and drops and Wales took the second 15/12. Sarah took control in the third and took it 15/8. The final game was nip and tuck and levelled at 14/14, with Sarah finally taking the match 3/1.

Next up was Pippa at No.3. Pippa used her fitness and tenacity and played some great squash and was too strong for her opponent and took the match 3/0 – 15/8 15/4 15/7.

Next on the captain against the over 60s National Champion, Sian Johnson. Sian was moving well around the court and using her excellent racket skills and great court awareness to ensure Mandy was having to work for every point. The first game was tight but Mandy was too quick and took it 15/3. The second was similar with some great squash from both players and lots of running, but again Mandy was just too quick and took the second games 15/10. Sian took the lead in the third game playing some great squash to give her game ball at 14/11, the captain responded by playing tighter and running faster to get back to 15/14, match ball, taking it at the first opportunity.

England 5 Wales 0 - The trophy was coming home!

Still two matches to go and Karen Hume was next up and taking on Annette Davies who was looking on good form. Annette took the first game 15/13. Karen responded with a strong second game taking it 15/3. Unfortunately, Annette had to pull up with an injury giving Karen the match.

Final game, Jill Campion against Lynne Davies, the Welsh captain and organiser. These two have played on numerous occasions, but today Jill was too strong for Lynne and put in a really strong performance with some great shots to take the match 3.0. 15/5 15/9 15/3.



ENGLAND 15 - IRELAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES 0

We did it! The trophy is in England's hands again.

Well done team, it was a great effort by all (as usual).

Mandy Akin
Team Captain