

2019 MASTER HOME INTERNATIONAL IRELAND

Event Dates:	Friday 3 rd - Saturday 4 th May 2019		
Address:	Galway Lawn Tennis Club, Galway, Ireland		
England Teams:	Men's O35	Men's O55	Women's O55
	Keith Timms (Captain) Alistair Coker Ross Gore Darren Lewis Phil Nightingale Alex Preston	Darren Withey (Captain) Alex Betts David Box David Gray John Parkes Eamonn Price	Hilary Kenyon (Captain) Mandy Akin Jill Campion Sarah Howlett Karen Hume Lesley Sturgess
	Men's O75		
	Nigel Belle (Captain) Bev Boag Leo Kingston Adrian Wright		

MENS OVER 35 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		17	20	20	57	1
	8		20	20	48	2
	2	0		6	8	4
	1	0	18		19	3

MENS OVER 35 REPORT

On the Friday, to kick start England's title defence, first up was Scotland. It was all plain sailing with comfortable victories, except Darren Lewis, who was still warming up, giving his opponent 2 games. A nice 5-0 win to the team!

Wales was our opposition on Saturday morning, having a similar standard to Scotland. Like professionals we went on to dispatch them with no trouble, so another 5-0 win to the team!



In the afternoon it was a different story, up against a very strong Ireland team. We knew this was the match that could go either way to take the title! First up was Ali Coker, who started well, then went on to finding the tin, along with some strokes against him, but he held his nerve to put England 1 up!

Ross Gore at string 3 played a great hard-fought match, but was felled by a better opponent, the score line was a close 3-0! The session was levelled!

Darren Lewis playing John Rooney, having lost the first game, turned out to be a cracker with some amazing rallies and finishing off with some classy nicks from Darren. What a match, ending 11-9 in the fifth! England now 2-1 up!

Next on court was Phil Nightingale, another hard-fought battle and again went to 5. Long rallies and some good squash as well as some disagreement with the referee! Phil held his nerve to play a decent last game 3-2!! England were now 3-1 up in rubbers which meant we were champions again!

Last match of the day was Keith Timms. The pressure was now off, but like the professional he is, he went about his business to beat the Irish captain in 3! England have regained the title score finishing 4-1, but this doesn't reflect the quality of the match, as there were some exciting and excellent performances, which could have gone either way!



Strong performances all round.. time to get the Guinness flowing!!!!

Keith Timms
Captain

MENS OVER 55 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		20	20	20	60	1
	2		6	8	16	4
	0	17		9	26	3
	1	19	14		34	2

MENS OVER 55 REPORT



A fine, talented, sociable array of individuals descended on Galway. Darren Withey (Bucks), Eamonn Price (Herts), Alex Betts (Middlesex), John Parkes (Worcs), David Gray and David Box, both Cumbria, arrived in the new host city by all different means of transport and destinations – via Dublin, Shannon, ferry, plane to name a few. We all assembled at Ardilaun Hotel for a brief chat in the sunshine to confirm ranking and order of play for the next few days along with the all-important social itinerary. We then headed to the club for the customary team photo and prepare for our

match against Scotland. Despite a couple of first game nerves for debutants Betts and Box everyone recorded 3/0 wins. An impressive start by all and so began the consumption of a celebratory Guinness.

Saturday morning, we were up against Wales and a slight change in line up but not in the result. Another impressive 5/0 win with only 1 game dropped and everyone playing their part supporting each other. After our high carb lunch, we prepared for the home nation match against Ireland. Our start was significantly delayed however, due to Men's O75 team taking centre stage and monopolising one court and not using both of their allocated courts, as they seemingly forgot how many matches were still to be played. However, when we finally got going, we carried on exactly where we had left off before lunch, wining all of our matches, dropping only 2 games. After handshakes all round we were delighted to have retained the trophy and the captain set about obtaining a couple of bottles of champagne to celebrate before the evening presentation back at the hotel.



We were joined on our table by the victorious Men's O35 team and after some excellent food and speeches by Captains' Withey and Timms, and many Baby Guinness (Sambuca and Coffee Liqueur shots), we all went into Galway to continue the celebrations until the very early hours.

Despite some communication issues with Box after he was selected (appears to be no mobile networks in Cumbria), we had no major concerns and each team member made the experience so enjoyable. They were all under Captain's orders all weekend and they responded positively despite a couple of fines for inappropriate behaviour against yours truly. Thanks to all the England teams present over the weekend and all supporters, David Lalor (tournament director), and all of the other players from Ireland, Scotland and Wales for an awesome weekend.

Special mention to my teammates:

- Dave Box who became team photographer and made a considerable improvement in his communication skills,
- Alex Betts who looked a different guy without his Queens All white kit,
- Dave Gray for being my golfing partner at Galway and Shannon,
- Eamonn Price who really needs to find a razor before a nest settles on his chin,
- and John Parkes for finally understanding how to check in online.

Finally, big thanks to my squad of players for playing and being so sociable throughout the weekend and making the experience so enjoyable.

Men's O55 Champions!!!

Darren Withey
Captain

MENS OVER 75 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		11	5	12	28	2
	3		1	5	9	4
	9	12		12	33	1
	0	9	1		10	3

MENS OVER 75 REPORT



Although a 3-man team, it was decided to take a 4th player, not as a reserve but as part of the side. Assuming no injuries No.1 would play all 3 matches and Nos. 2, 3 and 4 would each play 2 matches. We all assembled, on time, at the Galway Tennis Club having previously checked in to the excellent Ardilaun Hotel, 3 minutes drive away. Following team tactics, announcing the team order and taking of team photos, we were all fit and ready to do battle.

England vs Scotland

Having scanned all Countries teams it was quite obvious that Scotland would be our crucial match. Our No.1, World Champion Adrian Wright, took little time to record an emphatic 3/0 victory over Scotland's Captain Ken Reid. Leo Kingston at No.2, rather below par, just lost the first 14/16 and then lost the subsequent two games, so a 0/3 defeat.

Whilst these matches were being played and then finished, Nigel Belle at No.3 was having a marathon battle against Vinnie Taylor. At 0/2 down it was not looking promising for England. Some encouragement and verbal coaching goaded Nigel into positive action and 15/11, 15/11 later it was 2 all. A packed gallery, including half of Nigel's family, cheered him on but at 8/13 down defeat was staring England in the face. Suddenly it was 13/13. However, victory for England was not to be and he lost 13/15. A fantastic, good natured, hard match, but an overall defeat 2/3. Such a pity.

England vs Wales

The first session on Saturday morning saw our Bev Boag at No.3 play the renowned Wales Captain Garry Williams. Garry, nursing a knee injury, was not due to play but with Wales No.1 Brian Phillips not able to play through injury, he had to go on court. Despite two close games Bev came through 3/0.

Adrian Wright at No.1 powered his way to another 3/0 win as well as Leo Kingston at No.2 who redeemed himself from the previous day's loss.

So maximum points for England.



England vs Ireland

The afternoon session started badly for England. First up, Bev Boag at No.3, took on Myron Evans who gave the impression he was going to give up, retire and die every time he hit a bad shot. I lost count of how many times he dropped his racket and looked about to give up! Whether or not his behaviour had an effect on Bev I don't know but neither man appeared to want to dominate and hit the ball hard and win a rally, so a rather tame match see-sawed from start to finish – 15/11, 12/15, 15/17, 16/14, 14/16. A disappointing end - 73 points to Ireland, 72 to England.

On a brighter note both Adrian and Nigel recorded 3/0 victories neither of them being really troubled by their opponent.

So, as expected, the result of our first match against Scotland was crucial and having lost to them we were unable to retain the trophy and they won 33 points to our 28 with Wales 10 and Ireland 9. Well done Scotland!

Changing the venue from Dublin to Galway was a brilliant move. Nothing against Dublin, but we couldn't fault the courts and organisation of Galway. In addition, the choice of the Ardilaun Hotel was also a master stroke. Nothing was too much trouble and we were looked after exceptionally well from start to finish, especially for the dinner and presentation on the Saturday evening. Also, on the plus side was the giving of a water bottle to one's opponent. So much better than in previous years and although more expensive the standard of bottle was really good, worth the expense and very much appreciated by the opposition.

- Man of the Tournament: Adrian Wright – Played 3, Won 3, games lost: Nil.
- Match of the Tournament: Nigel Belle for his heroic effort against Scotland losing 13/15 in the 5th.

Nigel Belle
Captain

WOMENS OVER 55 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		20	20	20	60	1
	1		6	17	24	3
	6	18		20	44	2
	0	8	1		9	4

WOMENS OVER 55 REPORT

With everyone planning to arrive on Thursday, in plenty of time for our first match on Friday, no one would have thought there might be anything that could have disturbed the preparation and build up to the defence of the WO55s but Albert, Mandy Akin's husband had different ideas! When the Captain heard on Thursday evening that he'd been taken ill on the flight over and whisked to hospital by ambulance we wished him well, but it then dawned on us that we may not have our No.1 for the crucial match against Scotland on Friday. Time would tell!

At breakfast the following morning, in came Mandy, and after spending the night in a hospital chair, she told us Albert was feeling much better, but would be staying in for tests. Despite this she was up for playing the Scotland match. A great relief for the rest of the team. Phew!

England v Scotland

Scotland's team was strengthened this year with Sue Strachan coming in at two and on hearing Pauline Douglas was playing lower down the order at four we knew our work would be cut out. This fixture could go either way and would probably decide who would be taking the trophy home. In hindsight maybe the extended 2.5 hour walk in the morning taking in the sights of Galway was not ideal preparation!

Lesley Sturgess kicked the tie off winning the first comfortably 15-4 and although the next two were closer, both finishing 15-10 to Lesley she'd given the team a great start. Next up was Jill Campion who'd psyched herself up for her usual battle with Pauline Douglas but was now playing Heather Spens. The first game was tense with the lead changing throughout but, in the end, went Scotland's way 15-13. This was the wake-up Jill needed and by imposing her game she won the next three giving England a 2-0 lead.

First strings were next, and Mandy was up against Fiona McLean. With Mandy having won their last two encounters her confidence should be high but would the worry and lack of sleep effect Mandy's game? Fiona came out of the blocks strong with her usual speed and tenacity and Mandy certainly looked a little out of sorts, making uncharacteristic mistakes and losing the first 15-2. The second

was very close as Mandy battled to recover her form managing to edge it 15-13. It was nip and tuck in the third and fourth with each player taking a game and it was all to play for in the fifth. No one could call this one and both players were totally committed but in the end Mandy's skill together with a lot of grit and determination took the game 15-13 and the match 3-2.



England 3 up and the pressure was off for Karen and the Captain, but with every game counting they needed to put in a good performance. Karen was up next against Pauline, someone she'd never played before but whose reputation preceded her. As expected, this game was never going to be easy. Pauline started well playing her boasts and using the angles well which was extremely frustrating for Karen losing the first 15-10. She subsequently found her length in the second and levelled the tie, but Pauline took the third with her canny game and Scotland were now 2-1 up. Karen found herself 8-3 down in the fourth but wasn't about to give up and her dogged determination saw her take a closely contested fourth 15-13. Another match which couldn't be called but with Karen moving well and driving the ball deep forcing Pauline into some uncharacteristic mistakes, she took the fifth 15-11.

Having already said the pressure was off, it certainly didn't feel like when it was my turn as I played Sue Strachan in the 2nd string match. With everyone else winning the pressure was apparently

'showing in my face'! I took the first in a close 15-13 game but Sue fought back to equalise. We were both making unforced errors, but heeding Robert's advice I managed to take the next two 15-8, 15-11 and England had a clean sweep beating Scotland 5-0, a score which really didn't reflect the real battle against a very strong Scottish team. It had been a long night and if those 3-2s had gone Scotland's way this match could have been the decider. Thankfully it wasn't!

Our thanks go to Robert who tirelessly went down between everyone's games imparting his words of wisdom to the England team for which we were extremely grateful.

England v Wales

Saturday morning and the team faced Wales. Karen sat this one out and Sarah kicked off her Home Internationals, winning the first with some great lob serves and inch perfect backhand cross court drops 15-2. The second was a little closer but Sarah dug in to win 15-11 and normal service resumed in the third winning 15-4. A strong 3-0 performance. The rest of the team also put in some great performances and England took the match 5-0 without dropping a game.

England v Ireland

Time for a quick lunch stop before we were back on court for the afternoon fixture against Ireland and after their surprise win over Wales on Friday evening, we were expecting strong competition. Karen was slotted back into the squad, with Lesley sitting this one out. Sarah again put in a solid performance winning the first match 3-0 with Jill taking the 3rd string 3-1 after a closely contested second game which her opponent Mary O'Duffy took 15-13. The tie was sealed with three strong performances from Mandy, Karen and myself all winning 3-0 and England had successfully retained the Women's Over 55 Home Internationals in emphatic style. Let the celebrations begin!



In summary, The Galway Lawn Tennis Club was a fantastic venue and our thanks go out to all the tournament organisers for hosting an extremely well run and enjoyable event. The presentation dinner was held at the very pleasant and exceptionally friendly Ardilaun Hotel where we had been staying and with presentations and speeches complete it was time to hit the dance floor.

Many thanks to everyone involved, including our travelling supporters, Susan Pynegar, Robert Smith, Albert Atkin and Spencer Kenyon but my biggest and loudest thanks go to my England team. They were great company, with lots of team spirit and played brilliantly throughout the tournament to bring the trophy home. Well done everyone!

Hilary Kenyon
Team Captain