

## 2023 MASTER HOME INTERNATIONAL IRELAND

<b>Event Dates:</b>	Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> - Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2023		
<b>Address:</b>	Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club, Dublin		
<b>England Teams:</b>	<b>Men's O45</b>	<b>Men's O65</b>	<b>Women's O45</b>
	Matt Holland (Captain) Tim Burrell Alistair Coker Ian Cox Jolyon Head Mike Potter	Allen Barwise (Captain) Peter Alexander Ian Bradburn Stuart Hardy Ripley Oyler Mike Quartley	Louisa Dalwood (Captain) Ali Hewitt Christine McMullen Libby Montgomery Catherine Ruffle



## MENS OVER 45 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		15	17	20	52	1
	10		19	20	49	2
	3	4		19	26	3
	3	4	5		12	4

## MENS OVER 45 REPORT

This was the trip everyone wanted to be on, the home internationals weekend at the Fitzwilliam Club in Dublin. Some things we knew; it would be a great 'craic' and the Irish would put on an excellent show, (both true, obviously) some things we didn't know; what was the match schedule? and who was really in the Irish squad? (After it kept changing depending on the date of publication of each information document. Leeway given on both considering they were the home team).

The early loss of original captain and England Masters stalwart Mick Biggs from our team a month before the event was unfortunate, and up stepped Mike Potter who had been previously capped.





Despite the history of the Men's' O45 event (the winners reel on the trophy proudly stating that Wales in 2005 are the only team outside of England to have won the trophy since 1980!), the England team probably went into the weekend as 2nd favourites after the Irish pulled in some of their big guns. With the Irish boasting the current World O50's champion (and ex top 10 player), the recent World O45's runner up, and the current British Open O45 champion among their ranks, we English lads were up against it. Although we may not have superstar players at the top of our order in this particular squad, what we do have in abundance is strength in depth and having the ability to call on previously capped players to join the team highlights this. Therefore, although slight underdogs, I was confident we had the team squad depth to deliver overall victory, across all three matches. And I did not want to be only the 2nd captain is 40+ years not to take the title!

After the traditional team photos, it was onto the warmup and the first matches to kick off the event. With renowned England Masters events manager Brian Brock assisting the Irish admin guru Gerry Callanan in the organisation area it's no surprise that there were no markers pads, but tablets and scoring apps. The world is changing but this is masters squash so whilst to us this is new age stuff I'm sure this is the norm to the kids these days! All was going well until the tablets took their time resetting after each game resulting in some stressed out, old masters' players refereeing matches, not knowing how to use the tech, and therefore switching to the reliable pen and paper, Paul Barrell (Wales captain) resorting to scoring on a baggage tag receipt.



## England vs Wales

First up for the England team were Wales, missing some of their players from last year but adding the talented Jon Davies to their team, who had been playing some the events in England during the year.

**Jolyon Head vs Stephen Bird:** On first and making his debut a pumped-up Jolyon Head from Kent (via Hampshire and Avon). I had first played in a Hampshire U12 junior side with Jolyon more than 35 years ago so being able to present him with his tie for his first cap was a particularly nice moment.

A few wayward rallies early doors clearly from debut nerves resulted in a 1-0 deficit but once the nerves were calmed, Head went about his business with his delicate short game.....sorry, wrong player..... with his ruthlessly brutal hitting and running game being far too much for his opponent. A 3-1 win followed, and England were one up.

**Tim Burrell vs Dylan Davies:** Next up was Tim. Having turned 45 last summer and really giving it a crack this year, Tim has been playing his best squash for years and came into the event in great shape. Having got a few caps under his belt already there were no nerves and Burrell duly ran out a 3-0 winner.

**Matt Holland vs Jon Davies:** Captain was next up and came up against an inspired Welsh no.1. Holland never felt comfortable during the match (captains' nerves maybe), was quite uptight and Davies capitalised. After conceding 3 match balls to lose the 4th Holland found himself match ball down in the 5th but got lucky with Davies stopping during one rally at match ball up. Two better rallies from Holland meant he stole it from the Welshman at the death. Relief, and a 3-2 win making the tie safe for the team, 3-0 to England.

**Ali Coker vs Paul Barrell:** Ali only played one event this year but the nationals is not a bad tournament to get to a final in and he deserved his place in the side. Strong and quick Ali, was in no mood to keep the match alive and swiftly despatched the Wales captain 3-0 to take England to 4-0.

**Ian Cox vs Steve Williams:** Final match of the Friday night saw Coxy take on Steve Williams at 2. Ian was also keen to get this done and Steve was unable to match the force of Cox. 3-0 for the loss of a mere 7 points and that was the match finished.

The early finish enabled the team to take their place in the crowd to watch the pro's show how it's really done at the PSA Irish Open run by tournament director and all-round top Irishman Dara O'Flynn. A great day of squash for all.



## England vs Ireland

With no disrespect to both Wales and Scotland this was always going to be the deciding tie. The Irish were desperate to win on their own patch and the organiser Gerry had told me he had taken the last year persuading World O45 finalist Neil McCarron (based in Malaga) to come and play as a wild card, meaning ex top 10 player Derek Ryan would be at 2, (not a bad top of the order then!). A large crowd started to show to cheer on the home side including other local Irish age group players including Dara, David Ayerst and Rob Staunton, as well as the injured Neal Murphy (great to see Neal on the mend though). This was the big one and the nerves were started to show.

**Mike Potter vs Ronan Peyton:** Up first was Mike. I was confident he would have too much for his opponent however nerves can get hold of the best of us and Mike was never in control. Ronan was too good at times with his short game and Mike was tense and unable to assert his normal game. A nervy first game went to Ronan before Mike took a 2-1 lead and we started to breathe a little easier however Ronan was not to be done and took the fourth to make it a decider. Balcony heart rates at this point were pushing 100bpm (from the captain at least!). However, what a time to pull out your A-game as Mike stormed through the 5th 11-1 to take the opening tie. 1-0 to England.

**Tim Burrell vs Jon Hurley:** Tim was on next. Tim and John have a great battle history over the years with John coming out on top in their prior meeting, so the Irish were confident of the win. John is a great player however I know how consistently well Tim has been playing and this was the match I was least nervous about despite him losing the first game. My intuition was on point as Tim ground John down to take the next three games for a 3-1 win. A great performance from Tim and testament to his level this year.

**Matt Holland vs Neil McCarron:** The captain needed an improved performance than the previous day however the nerves from watching the others did not do much for the preparation. Neil plays a fast game and is so quick and Holland took some time to get into the match. A comfortable first game went to McCarron before Holland got into his stride and made the second closer albeit falling short. The third was close and McCarron reached match ball before Holland clawed his way back before a monumental rally ensued with Holland sending the Irishman to all corners and incredibly the ball kept coming back. Eventually the pressure told and Holland saw out the third. He came out like a train in the fourth into a 6-0 then 9-3 lead, but Neil changed his game completely and hit three pure winners followed by a nice back wall nick and a few errors by Holland and suddenly it was 9-9. This is a mental game at these points and the momentum had shifted. Neil went on to wrap up the match 3-1 much to the captain's disappointment. Match score 2-1 to England.

**Ali Coker vs Nick Staunton:** This was always likely to be the deciding rubber once the teams were announced and although Ali beat Nick quite convincingly in the British Nationals in February, we all know what Nick is capable of. His greatest strength I think is his pure self-belief and combined with sublime racket skills he is always a dangerous opponent. Having world referee John Massarella at the helm in the referee's seat however meant the typical Staunton antics we've all become accustomed to in order to catch a breath here and there, were not so prevalent. Nick took the early advantage with some trademark winners and had three game points in the first before Ali reeled him back to take it. The second was tight all the way and Ali secured the game proceeding to then break his racket by slamming it into the floor in pure elation. The fourth saw Ali go ahead only to be pipped by some sublime winners from Nick to take it. Stress levels from the crowd at this point through the roof!! Luckily Ali dealt calmly with it and returned to court in no mood to relinquish the match and blitzed the last game 11-3 to take the match and securing the tie for the English. Relief particularly for the captain whose heart rate then proceeded to return to more normal levels.

**Ian Cox vs Derek Ryan:** Last on and with the pressure off was Ian against Derek Ryan. Coxy bamboozles most players with his power hitting and winners from anywhere so we were intrigued at how ex world no. 7 Ryan would counter this. Ian gave it his all and at times Derek was indeed bamboozled however only the elite get to the very top of this game and Derek's experience and class shone through with his effortless movement, accuracy and game management. In his 50's he remains a joy to watch, he had Coxy moving all over the court and an inevitable victory ensued 3-0 to Derek.

Therefore, England prevailed 3-2 in probably the most competitive and stressful team match I have been involved with. The initial relief at winning quickly replaced with joy, despite the job not yet being finished. A special mention to the Irish team and supporters. They played hard and were desperate for the win in front of their home crowd but despite the disappointment they were all magnanimous in defeat and accepted it with grace (even Nick!). Classy response from the home team

The organisation of the weekend was, in the main, top notch although one aspect that was never going to play out was allotting 2.5 hours for the morning sessions, all on one court, scheduling to finish before lunch at 12pm. The match finished at 13:30 which gave no time for lunch and a quick turnaround meant we were straight into the Scottish match. Fortunately, it was the same for both teams as the Scots had had a long battle with the Welsh in the morning session, so at least there was no advantage and ultimately it meant we could finish earlier and head to the bar!

### **England vs Scotland**

**Jolyon Head vs David McCormick:** Jolyon fresh after sitting out the morning match and being fuelled by a huge breakfast was keen to get the job done and he did just that comfortably winning in three.

**Matt Holland vs Keith Simpson:** No. 1's were on next as no one else could go on having either just finished their last match or just finished eating! Keith plays some outrageous shots from the front and is always dangerous however Holland was in no mood to make this a battle as the legs would probably not have made it, so ensured it was finished as quickly as he could muster. A 3-0 win to the Englishman put England 2-0 and one tie away from overall victory.

**Mike Potter vs Barry Masson:** On next was Mike and his mental and physical exerts from the morning session had clearly taken their toll. Barry is a good player and made the most of an out of sorts Mike to come away with a 3-0 victory. Mike was disappointed however he had done the hard work earlier that day so it didn't matter.

**Ali Coker vs Adrian Richmond:** It was left to Ali to bring home the points needed for victory against Adrian who has superb hold and sends most opponents the wrong way during each match. A few taxis for Coker went then countered and Ali came out on top 3-0 to wrap up the tie and the weekend for England. A great weekend's work from the Englishman.

**Tim Burrell vs Andy Spiers:** Last up was Tim to complete the matches. Before the start and having already won the tie, Tim shouted up to us on the balcony that we could all go and watch the Irish PSA final, and he didn't expect us to watch his match. Obviously, that was never going to happen, (we'd rather watch 45's squash to the young pro's any day) and we cheered Tim to his inevitable victory.

The win was secured, and the relief was evident. The Irish team could not catch us regardless of the result of their upcoming match against the Welsh. England had retained the Men's O45 title, and the celebrations could commence.

Thus followed the presentation dinner and speeches including a nice touch by Allen Barwise in getting all new caps regardless of nationality to stand up for a round of applause, and team photos for the winners before we were into the Fitz bar and then into the bars of Dublin escorted by our host Gerry.





Congratulations to both the England Women's O45 and England Men's O65 teams for also securing victories, particularly the O65's whose original team was decimating over the last two weeks. A big thank you to all players from all the teams without whom the weekend would not have been as much fun. And also, to Gerry and all at Irish Squash (including our own Brian Brock) for putting on a tremendous event with the added bonus of being at the same time as a PSA tournament that we all had access to.

I look forward to the next one, if I make the team.

**Matt Holland**  
**Captain**

## MENS OVER 65 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		18	15	20	53	1
	6		14	20	40	2
	9	8		16	33	3
	3	3	9		15	4

## MENS OVER 65 REPORT



A welcome return to the fabulous Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club began with utter disruption to the team. Three of the original team selections were side-lined with various issues. Thankfully, very able deputies were brought in, two at very late notice. Many thanks to them.

We kicked off on Friday against a decent Welsh team hoping to put one over on the English. Mike Quartley, making his debut won a tense first match 3-2 after suffering a nervous opening two games coming back to win 13-11 in the fifth. A tremendous start for the Cheshire man.



Second up was ESM's chairman Stuart Hardy, he used his all-round court craft to register a creditable 3-1 win against Phil Monaghan. Captain Allen Barwise then had a 3-0 win against the Welsh No. 1 to clinch the match. Ripley Oyler playing at 4 beat the experienced Graham Bastion 3-0, a fine performance from Rip. Ian Bradburn took the final rubber again 3-0 giving England a splendid 20-3 result. Harder matches were to come.....

Ireland were up next, a friendly, funny bunch of individuals supported by a partisan crowd. Michael Mulhall took out Ripley 3-1 in a closely contested match. Braddy then played the combative James McSweeney, a physical encounter with the Wigan warrior coming out on top after four tough games. Barwise then won 3-0 against a top lad Michael Conlan, Mike producing some excellent drops but Allen was always too quick at the front of the court to have too much trouble.

Hardy then had a comfortable 3-0 win against Pat Hanley, drops and reverse angles being Stuart's trademark shots.

At two we had the ex-world champion, Peter Alexander, he had a tremendous tussle against Bert Cotter winning 11-8 in the fifth. This was a welcome return to competitive action from Pete after several years away from the game. England 18 Ireland 6.

The old enemy were expected to be our toughest test, this proved to be true.



First into the fray was new man Mike, he was 2-2 with Clark Adam then suffered a calf tear, incredibly disappointing for the debutant. Scotland one up. Due to transport issues, the order was altered, and Peter came up against the tough match player Pete Chivas at two. Chivas powered through our man who had only been off court an hour before this match 3-0. Scotland 2-0. Nerves were starting to show on the England team.

Allen Barwise then produced a sensational comeback with his team about to go out of the completion against his good friend Robin Ridley, both Carlisle Squash Club members. Robin took the first 11-5, the second 14-12. England were losing the weekend at this stage. Composure ensued and Allen altered tactics, playing winners from all round the court taking the next three games 4, 5 and 3. England were back in it.

Stuart knew he had to take the next match, although a little twitchy he took it in four very tight games. A great weekend for the England man. With the match poised at 2-2 Braddy used his vast experience to close out the weekend with a comfortable 3-0 win. Top performance from the Warrior!!! England 16 Scotland 9

To close this match report I would like to thank Rip, Peter and Mike for showing great commitment in turning out this weekend. Mike was our star of the weekend winning 5 points out of a possible 6 on his debut.

Great credit to England Men's O45s and Women's O45's who also won their respective weekends, fantastic performances from all.

To finish I would like to give many thanks to Gerry Callanan, Fitz, Irish Squash, Brian Brock (temporary Irishman) and all the players for a wonderful weekend.



**Allen Barwise**  
**Captain**

## WOMENS OVER 45 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team				Guest Team	Total	Position
		20	20	17	57	1
	1		15	10	26	2
	0	9		5	14	3
Guest Team	6	15	18		39	-

## WOMENS OVER 45 REPORT

A great craic! Absolutely grand.



The tone of the weekend was set on arriving at the hotel to find John Massarella in reception over for the PSA event at the same venue, kindly volunteering to mark the odd masters matches. Friendliness, banter and great squash were the main themes of the weekend.

The England team consisted of prior team members Catherine Ruffle, Chrissie McMullen and Louisa Dalwood (Captain) with Libby Montgomery and Ali Hewitt both making their Home International debuts.



Unfortunately, the Welsh did not field a team for this event. However, we were incredibly grateful for the phenomenal European guest team that was pulled together in their place. Thanks to Orla O'Doherty, Annabelle Diamantino, Siobhan Parker, Jenny Dillon and Lynda Dunlop for providing us with some excellent matches on Friday afternoon and helping to settle the nerves in an English 4-1 victory.



On Saturday morning, we played the Irish team. Despite their best efforts to disarm us with compliments and ridiculous friendliness there were some brilliant battles:

- 1: Catherine v Rachel McNulty – “The battle of the runners”
- 2: Chrissie v Suzanne Swan – “The battle of the cross court”
- 3: Louisa v Saiorse O’Sullivan – “Just a battle!”
- 4: Libby v Suzanne O’Shaughnessy – “The battle of the lengths”
- 5: Ali v Sarah Scanlan – “The battle of the hard hitters.”

England came out fighting, played much more positively and did well to beat one of the strongest Irish teams of recent years, 5-0.

The Scotland match in the afternoon also brought out some great squash. The chatty team was Pauline Douglas (1), Emma Robinson (2), Karen Robertson (3) Sam Hart (4) and Elaine Inglis (5).

My vote for the rally of the whole weekend was Catherine playing the astonishing Pauline Douglas who managed to play an inexplicable number of off the back wall shots in a long rally in between retrieving many of Catherine’s deadly drops and winning it with a nick. Respect. The English girls maintained their determination and despite some valiant Scottish performances, were too strong for them, winning 5-0 win to seal the Home International champion’s title.





Well done to everyone involved and thanks to Gerry and Brian for organising a fabulous weekend.

**Louisa Dalwood**  
Captain

