

## 2024 MASTERS HOME INTERNATIONAL ENGLAND

<b>Event Dates:</b>	Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> - Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2024		
<b>Address:</b>	Nottingham Squash Club		
<b>England Teams:</b>	<b>Men's O45</b>	<b>Men's O65</b>	<b>Women's O45</b>
	Mick Biggs (Captain) Paul Warner James Greenhead Tim Burrell Alistair Coker Nick Hargreaves	Tom Burton (Captain) Allen Barwise Nick Gollaglee Ian Bradburn David Stones David Kirk Julian Craxton	Catherine Ruffle (Captain) Kate Bradshaw Natalie Townsend Nicky Green Caroline Hazlewood Helen Knowles
	<b>Women's O65</b>		
	Sue Pynegar (Captain) Lesley Sturgess Julie-Ann Pegram Ann Manley		



## MENS OVER 45 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		19	20	20	59	1
	6		20	18	44	2
	2	5		20	27	3
	0	6	2		8	4

## MENS OVER 45 REPORT



Looking at the Men's O45 trophy, which originated in 1980, I could see England had won every year bar one. Additionally with England #1 Matt Holland unavailable for selection, I'd be lying if I said I wasn't feeling some pressure...

### Session 1 vs Wales

England regular Nick Hargreaves was looking fit and tanned after returning from a training holiday in Mauritius. He was also sporting one of the sharpest haircuts I've seen in Masters squash. His opponent at #5 was Andrew Kettlewell, who pushed Hargreaves hard in the first game. After a tough mid-game that went back and forth, the Englishman constructed some effective rallies to bring it home 11-8. The next two games were more straightforward, with the Welshman feeling the relentless pace. Hargreaves finished the match with an audacious crosscourt volley nick, for a 3-0 win.

At #3 Paul "Wingman" Warner was making his debut. I later found the Wingman moniker is due to Paul's involvement with the RAF not because he helps his mates pull down the local pub at the weekend. Any worries about the new boy being nervous were quickly quashed as Warner set about destroying his opponent Steve Bird 3-0 in record time.

At #1 captain Mick Biggs faced Welsh stalwart Paul Barrell. The first two games were tightly contested with Biggs just scraping through to take both. In the third it was evident Barrell had played his hand, whilst Biggs still had an ace or two up his sleeve. The captain cruised home 11-1 for a 3-0 win. The match was now in the bag.

Another debut was being made by James Greenhead at #4. By the age of 45 most squash players are starting to struggle with their movement and slowing down their game. Greenhead bucks this trend dramatically, moving like a man in his twenties and doing the splits at least twice per match. This proved far too much for opponent Phil Cording, who stood open-mouthed as he watched the Englishman get back everything that was thrown at him. The result was 3-0 to Greenhead and another successful debut had been made.

The responsibility of securing maximum points was left to #2 Ali Coker. Coker is the complete squash player - smooth movement, power, control and experience. All this was too much for opponent Steve Glenton, with Coker running out a 3-0 winner without much fuss.

### ***Match over England 20 points Wales 0***

#### **Session 2 vs Ireland**

On paper this match was the one that was likely to decide which nation lifted the trophy. While we were claiming victory over Wales, Ireland had produced a similar result against Scotland.

With Tim Burrell coming into the team at #4, James Greenhead had been pushed down to #5 for this match, where he faced Ronan Peyton. An electric start from the Englishman saw him take the first game 11-1. Peyton is vastly experienced at this level however and he started to slow the game down, upsetting Greenhead's rhythm. The next two games were a lot closer with some great rallies being played. Greenhead's superior physicality, along with some nice flicks at the front of the court were enough to get him over the line for a fine 3-0 win.

At #3 Paul Warner faced Irish Nation Champion Kevin Knox. This had all the hallmarks of being a classic and it didn't disappoint. Warner took the first with some excellent attacking squash, which left his opponent a bit flat footed. Knox struck back in the second as he found his rhythm and forced Warner into making errors. The next two games were absolutely brutal affairs with both men knowing full well what was at stake. Warner dug deep to edge the third 13-11 and then Knox struck back to take the fourth 11-9. This hurt the Englishman and Knox turned the screw in the fifth to take the match 3-2.

At #1 Mick Biggs was pitted against old rival and current European Champion Neil McCarron. Going into this one the head to head was 1-1. Biggs started like he finished his match the previous day, attacking accurately to the front of the court. This was just enough to take a well contested first game 11-7. Seeing how well the court was taking a short ball, McCarron accepted the challenge and went all out attack himself. This led to a short but entertaining second and third game, with the captain taking both to seal a 3-0 victory.

At 2-1 up in the match, England now needed a calm head to take the reins. You couldn't ask for a better fit for this role than Tim Burrell, who was facing the similarly experienced Keith Moran at #4. Burrell caught Moran cold in the first two taking them comfortably with some well structured rallies and accurate winners. Moran switched on in the third and took the Englishman by surprise to win 11-4. The fourth went to the wire with Moran digging deep to edge home 12-10. There was huge pressure on the fifth as Ireland would be right back in the match if Moran took it. Burrell responded well and went back to playing the sort of squash which had won him games one and two. Moran had clearly done a lot of work to claw his way back and had nothing left as the Englishman brought it home 11-2.

With the possibility of the whole tie riding on him, Ali Coker felt like he had already played a match or two in expended nervous energy, before even stepping on court. He faced a tricky customer at #2 in Neal Murphy. Coker started well taking the first two games both 11-7. Murphy however, had clearly been reading the Nick Staunton Squash Handbook and slowed the game down to a painful pace between points. This frustrated the Englishman and allowed Murphy to sneak the third 14-12. In the fourth the referee finally stepped in and requested Murphy speed up. The Irishman was quick to point out that he was 49 years old and Coker was only... err, also 49 - argument lost. This was all the motivation Coker needed to go up through the gears and take the game 11-5 for a 3-1 win.

### ***England 19 Ireland 6***

#### **Session 3 vs Scotland**

With two great wins already in the bag any win against Scotland would be enough to lift the trophy.

Having been rested during the Ireland match, Nick Hargreaves bounced onto the court bursting with energy. Scotsman David McCormick was his opponent at #5. Hargreaves' game is built on good length and his phenomenal endurance. He used this to good effect to pin McCormick in the back corners. Even when the front of the court was at his mercy, Hargreaves was having too much fun and simply pumped the ball to the back again, further sapping the reserves of the already flagging Scotsman. After a 20 minute workout for Hargreaves and 20 minutes of sheer hell for McCormick the match was over with the Englishman coming out on top 3-0.

At #3 Paul Warner was pitted against Richard Campbell. The Englishman showed no ill effects from his epic battle earlier in the day and raced to a 2-0 lead. Campbell is a seasoned campaigner however, and steadied his resolve to take the third. At this stage the crowd were worried Warner's legs might have gone. They couldn't have been more wrong as the Englishman came out firing in the forth, blowing Campbell away 11-0.

Scottish #1 Alan Tasker hits the ball as sweetly as anyone in Masters squash and captain Biggs had to work hard to dig back the barrage of attacks from the Scotsman's racket. This solid retrieving along with some good counter punches of his own, allowed the Englishman to get his nose in front and ultimately take the first game. In the second it was evident the brutal weekend schedule was starting to catch up with Tasker, as he started to miss his targets. Biggs took full advantage of this and raced through to take the game 11-2. The third followed a similar pattern and Biggs soon had the match wrapped up 3-0. This also meant England had an unassailable lead in the tie and the trophy had been retained.

Considering it was a dead rubber, Tim Burrell and Barry Masson put on a hugely entertaining game at #4. With both still moving well the rallies were long with good shot variations from both players. Masson took a tough first, before Burrell flew out the blocks in the second and raced away taking it 11-2. The third and fourth were tightly contested with the Englishman edging both for a fine 3-1 victory.

At #2 Ali Coker faced the incredibly skillful and flamboyant Chris Gray. With shots you'd likely see in an exhibition match, Gray is definitely a crowd pleaser. Coker had seen it all before though and gradually wore his opponent down with his superior conditioning. An exciting clash of styles and three entertaining games, but it was the Englishman who came out on top with a 3-0 win.

### ***England 20 Scotland 2***



I'd personally like to congratulate the England team for their fantastic performances and great camaraderie. It was an absolute pleasure to captain the team. Congratulations also to the Scottish, Irish and Welsh teams. The level of squash on display was incredible and every match was played in good spirits with the highest level of sportsmanship.

On behalf of the team I'd like to say thanks to the referees on Saturday, who did an excellent job. A huge thank you to Nottingham Squash Club and all the volunteers who helped make it a great weekend. Special thanks goes to Alan Barwise, Alison Goy and Brian Brock for organising such a fantastic event.

**Mick Biggs**  
**Team Captain**

## MENS OVER 65 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		20	20	20	60	1
	2		8	19	29	3
	0	14		19	33	2
	2	4	7		13	4

## MENS OVER 65 REPORT



A very strong England Men's over 65 team travelled to Nottingham with the aim being to retain the trophy which England have never lost, no pressure! Dave Kirk, Dave Stones and Julian Craxton were rewarded for their commitment and performances throughout the season and deservedly received their first caps. The team order was discussed - Allen Barwise (Cumbria), Tom Burton (Herefordshire) Captain, Nick Gollaglee (Somerset), Ian Bradburn (Lancashire), David Kirk (Oxfordshire), David Stones (Lincolnshire) and Julian Craxton (Hertfordshire) who was a more than willing replacement for Ian Bradburn (Bradders) who was unavailable for the Friday session.

First up was Wales and a first cap for Julian against Richard Manners. The first 3 games were tight with Julian winning the first two but then he made some unaccustomed errors on the backhand side losing the third 11-9. He regrouped and won the fourth 11-6, a 3-1 win. David Kirk understandably was a bit nervous on his debut but showed no signs when on court, playing his usual brand of squash with some tight stuff up and down the walls before moving in to play some winning drops against Adrian Alderton, a comfortable 3-0 win. Next up was the captain at No 1 deputising for Allen who was busy organising the event. This was a battle between Tom (current Welsh Open champion) and Huw Davies (Welsh Closed champion) who was making his debut. Tom started well with winning a competitive first game 11-8 coming back from 8-6 down. Another tight game in the second which Tom came back again this time from 10-7 down to win 14-12. Huw hit back to win the 3rd 11-8 before Tom upped the pace to win the fourth 11-3 and secure the match for England. Fourth on was Nick and with the match in the bag he was able to play his usual array of drops and lobs without too much pressure against a regular Welsh International Mark Davies, result 3-0 (11-7, 11-7, 11-7). Last up was David Stones, also making his debut who was very determined to impress, a comfortable 3-0 win vs Paul Brennan and a number of first pumps from David ensured England got off to a flying start. On the adjacent court Scotland pipped Ireland 3-2 in a closely fought match with Peter Shivas winning the final match 3-0.

An early start on Saturday morning which raised concerns that the courts may be a bit cold as they were for the Nationals back in February, our concerns were unfounded and court 8 played perfectly apart from the huge nicks which I rarely hit. With Bradders available for the Ireland match Dave Kirk was rested for the afternoon session. First up was Dave Stones against Bert Cotter, a solid 3-0 win 12-10 11-7 11-8 and another determined performance which got us off to a flying start. Next up was Nick against the 'coalman' James McSweeney. In the first game poor old James didn't know what had hit him, Nick taking it 11-1, his precise drops and lobs and deception truly bamboozled James. James then started to force a few errors although Nick finished strongly to take the second and third 11-7 11-7, another 3-0 win. I felt for James having been 'Gollagreed' myself several times this season, Nick's style of play and excellent court coverage makes him an extremely difficult player to beat especially when his serves come down with ice on them! Third up was our No 1 Allen against the Irish champion David Lalor, Allen's customary high tempo and solid hitting never allowed David into the game and he secured a comfortable 3-0 win 11-3 11-1 11-4. Fourth match on was Bradders who had got up at the crack of dawn to travel down from Wigan. Ian the defending British Open Champion has struggled with injury this season but was determined to represent his country once again. His opponent was Peter Stephens who was fresh from his bronze medal at the Slovenian masters. This was the tightest match of the weekend in which Bradders found a way to win despite his mobility issues he suffers following his numerous operations. Ian was 2-1 down and looking like he was going to lose but like the warrior he is fought back to win the fifth 11-8 taking the match 3-2 (11-8, 9-11, 7-11, 11-6, 11-8). With the match in the bag Captain Tom was in no mood to let up against Michael Mulhall and produced a powerful display to win 3-0 (11-4, 11-2, 11-3) forcing a number of high backhand volleys errors from the big left hander. A 5-0 win for England setting up a decider against Scotland who beat Wales 4-1.

A light lunch was had before the decider commenced; beforehand Robin Ridley the Scottish captain had raised concerns that should we play Allen we would be too strong especially as Peter Shivas who playing out of order at 3 made himself unavailable. The team convened and agreed that we would go with our strongest team and take no chances. So first up was David Stones against Bryan Jackson and again Dave put in a solid determined performance to win 3-0 (11-7, 11-6, 11-2). On court next was Nick who was at his mesmerising best to win 3-0 (11-3, 11-2, 11-8). It was fitting that Allen having put in so much effort to organise the event should clinch the trophy for England by beating Robin Ridley 3-0 (11-6, 11-9, 11-7). Dave Kirk played another solid match winning 3-0 against Bryan Jackson

(11-7, 11-4, 11-8). Last on was Tom who was up against Keith Gristwood, Tom making his 10<sup>th</sup> appearance for England won 3-0 (11-5, 11-5, 11-9).



Overall, a dominant victory with England not dropping a rubber all weekend. Many thanks to Allen Barwise and Brian Brock for their organization over the weekend and also the referees and volunteers at club.

**Tom Burton**  
**Team Captain**



## WOMENS OVER 45 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		17	20	20	57	1
	4		5	7	16	4
	1	17		9	27	3
	1	14	16		31	2

## WOMENS OVER 45 REPORT



A very strong England women's over 45 team travelled to Nottingham with the aim to retain the trophy; Catherine Ruffle, Kate Bradshaw, Natalie Townsend, Nicky Green, Caroline Hazelwood and Helen Knowles.

First up on Friday was Wales. It was decided that Caroline should save her England debut for Saturday, so Helen was first on against Sally Davis. A slightly nervous start, understandably, but Helen soon settled and secured a fairly comfortable 3-0 victory. Next up was Natalie vs Clare Catto. Natalie started well, and won the first 11-7, but Clare fought back in the 2nd, taking it 11-8. Natalie then cruised through to a 3-1 win. Number 1's, Catherine vs Helen Barnard, up next. With Helen's good form this season, Catherine was nervous and knew she had to play her A game. Fortunately, she managed to pull it out of the bag and win 3-0. Nicky vs Gill Griffith's, another nervy start from England, but Nicky did really well to come back and win the 1st 12-10 and the next 2 11-7 11-7. Finally, Kate vs Rhian Davis at 2. Rhian is never an easy opponent, but Kate started strong and managed to keep up her momentum for a 3-0 victory. So, a good start to the weekend for England with 20 points on the board. A bit of shower excitement followed, as there was no hot water in the ladies, so we had to use the men showers! The captain then allowed a couple of alcoholic beverages for those who wished and then it was an early ish night for all.

Saturday was a reasonably early start, with Ireland as the oppo. A lot of familiar experienced faces in the Irish side suggested this was not going to be an easy fixture. First up was the number 5's, Helen vs Niamh Darcy. Knowing she wasn't going to be playing in the afternoon match, Helen gave it her all, and secured a fairly comfortable 3-0 win. Next up was Natalie vs Suzanne O'Shaughnessy. Natalie hadn't been feeling 100%, but after a slow start, closed out the 2nd and 3rd quite quickly. Catherine vs Suzanne Swan at 1. These 2 have never played each other and both were looking forward to their match. It was a lovely game of squash, but Catherine was fortunate to come out on top. Next up was the highlight of the weekend, Caroline's England debut! Unfortunately for Caroline she came up against a very strong Sandra Walshe from Ireland, who came out all gun's blazing and didn't really give Caroline a chance to get into the game. A 3-0 loss for Caroline, but she now had her England cap, so all was not lost! Finally, Kate vs Saoirse O'Sullivan at 2. A good long hard first game, with Saoirse coming out on top. Fortunately, Kate fought back in the 2nd to gain control and ended up winning the match 3-1. So, another victory in the bag and 17 points on the board.

And finally, Scotland on Saturday afternoon. Fortuitously for England, Scotland had had a few hard matches against Wales in the morning, so hopefully they would be tired! First up, Caroline, keen to get a victory under her belt. Max Thompson had some lovely shots, but Caroline was a bit too quick for her and managed a fairly comfortable 3-0 win. Next up Natalie vs Jenn Saldana. The games were quite close, but Natalie was moving well and won 3-0. Catherine vs Katy Temple. Katy had had a tough match in the morning vs Helen and seemed a bit stiff to start, which Catherine took advantage of, taking the first 11-1. However, the 2nd was closer and Catherine nearly lost the 3rd, but managed to just win it with a ridiculous boast to clinch the match. Nicky vs Karen Robertson was another close ish match in terms of points in each game, but Nicky played well and secured a 3-0 win. Finally, Kate vs Sabine Mackenzie. Kate started well, had a bit of a wobble in the 2nd, but then got back into her rhythm and won the 3rd and 4th. So, another victory, another 20 points on the board, and winners of the weekend!



I'd like to thank my team; all our opponents; the tournament organisers from England Squash Masters, Allen Barwise and Brian Brock; Alison Goy for her great work behind the bar; Nottingham Squash Club for hosting the event; all the referees; St. James Hotel and the Park Plaza Hotel for their hospitality. A fantastic weekend was had by all-bring on next year!

**Catherine Ruffle**  
**Team Captain**



## WOMENS OVER 65 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		9	9	4	22	2
	4		1	2	7	4
	4	12		1	17	3
	11	12	12		35	1

## WOMENS OVER 65 REPORT



## **Session 1 England vs Wales**

3rd seeds Lynne Davies (Wales) and Susan Pynegar (England) played competitive nip and tuck squash throughout with 2 games going to 13 and 12. Lynne was on tremendous form, with accurate front court play, tight length and width, and deceptive lobs, which had the England player scurrying around the four corners of the court. Wales 3-0 (13-11 11-7 12-10)

1st seeds Jill Campion (Wales) and Julie-Anne Pegram (England) were well matched for most of the game. Jill got off to a roaring lead very quickly, while Julie-Anne found her feet and hit through the nerves on what was her first cap for England. Julie-Anne came back fighting in the second and served and volleyed brilliantly to take the game 11-8. Games three and four were very tight with Jill narrowly taking both. Jill's power and experience and heavily disguised trickle boasts came to the fore in the crunch points. Wales 3-1 (11-1 8-11 11-9 12-10)

2 seeds Sian Johnson (Wales) and Lesley Sturgess (England). This was an exciting five setter in which Lesley got off to a commanding start, only losing nine points in the first two games. Sian's racket skills were at their best in the third, which she took 11-3. The fourth was evenly matched with both players running hard in some long rallies. Sian hit a purple patch at the end of the game to take it 12-10. She got another great start to the final game, but Lesley pulled it back to win 11-7.

## **Session 2 England vs Ireland**

Ann Manley played for England against Gay Grant of Ireland. The newly capped Irish player showed some great skills in her shot play when she settled into the game, but finally had little response to Ann's experience, exemplary serving and fine court craft. England win 11-2 11-3 11-4

Julie-Anne Pegram (England) vs Maureen Duke (Ireland). This promised to be a very tightly fought contest, with both players having similar games and excelling at touch shots from all areas of the court. On the day, Maureen was on top form, making excellent choice of shots throughout, winning most of the front court battles and putting up perfect lobs. The third game could have gone either way but both players, struggling with nerves, failed to convert several game points. Maureen finally took the game by taking advantage of a couple of errors from the England player. Ireland win 11-9 11-6 18-16)

Lesley Sturgess (England) against Rose Hynes (Ireland). Lesley got off to a slow start to the first game with Rose playing winners off poor shots and winning it 11-8. Lesley steamed back in the next three games with tight serving, powerful lengths and impeccable shot selection to win 8-11, 11-2 11-2, 11-2.

## **Session 3 England vs Scotland**

The final session saw Susan Pynegar take on Christina Graham of Scotland. It was a close match with Christina taking the first game, playing good serves and returns and reading the opponents game too well. The second and third games were equally close with some long rallies and much court covered by both, but the England player eventually found some better length to take the games. 7-11 11-7 11-9 11-4 to England.

Julie-Anne Pegram v. Pauline Douglas. This was always going to be a tricky match for Julie-Anne against Pauline's wealth of experience in international match play. The first game saw Pauline take control from the start, but Julie-Anne responded with some inspired squash and fought back to take the game to 10 all. The Scottish player put in two excellent serves and took the game. The second game was very much hand in, hand out, through to 8 all. The power of Pauline's shots to the back of the court and the disguised direction took the game for her 11-8. Scotland got a 4-0 start to the final game which was too much for the English player to make up. This was a tightly fought

competitive match, with great skills on show: not adequately reflected in the game scores. Scotland win: 12-10 11-8 11-6

Eunice Bond went on court against Lesley Sturgess with the match tied at 1 rubber apiece, and the runner-up position for the tournament in the balance. Lesley rose immediately to the challenge, playing some of her best squash to take a six-point lead for England. Eunice calmed her nerves and fought back scoring a clutch of points with some hard, tight and low shots and great returns of serve. The second game was much tighter at 12-10 with players well matched and some excellent strategic squash. However, Lesley continued to play powerful squash, maintaining tight straight width and good length, coupled with excellent shot selection, to take the match in three games. England win: 11-6 12-10 11-7



So, England Ladies O65 claimed the runner-up position in this group, with Wales as clear winners, Scotland in third and finally Ireland. The team thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of the weekend.

There was some very competitive, skillful and athletic squash played in the group and amazing quality of matches to watch in the other sections.

On behalf of the team, I would like to thank the tournament organisers, England Squash Masters, and in particular Brian Brock, who kept the matches running smoothly and all the administration and comms in perfect order; also, Allen Barwise, who had the unenviable task of arranging the venues, accommodation and catering and keeping the teams in order on the day.

A big thanks also to Alison Goy who spent the weekend keeping the bar at the squash club going. Thank you also to those who helped her out and for other volunteers at Nottingham Squash Club, without whom the tournament could not have taken place: particularly James Dand and Russell Foster. We are also grateful to Kieran and his team of caterers who kept all the players well fed over the weekend.

We must also thank the referees both from England Squash and the volunteers, who make the event so much more relaxing and enjoyable for those taking part.

St James Hotel and the Park Plaza Hotel provided fine accommodation and catering for the Saturday night dinner. A great time was had by all. Thank you to the serving staff and to those who worked so hard to make the evening so enjoyable for us.

A final big thank you to all you ladies who came to Nottingham, playing with such enthusiasm, good humour and supportive team spirit. As always, there was a great sense of camaraderie amongst all the home nations. Congratulations Jill, Sian and Lynne on another fine win.

**Susan Pynegar**  
**Team Captain**