

2024 MASTER HOME INTERNATIONAL IRELAND

Event Dates:	Friday 26 th - Saturday 27 th April 2024		
Address:	Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club, Dublin		
England Teams:	Men's O50	Men's O70	Women's O50
	Paul Boyle (Captain) Matthew Stephenson Adam Dominey Wayne Beglan Chris Lynam Mike Gregory	John Goodrich (Captain) Terry Belshaw Geoff Redfern Robert Holdsworth Tony Pensom Andrew Edmondson	Linda Prichard (Captain) Sarah Parr Louisa Dalwood Chrissie McMullen Rachel Calver Debbie Locke



MENS OVER 50 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		10	16	20	46	2
	15		20	15	50	1
	8	4		18	30	3
	0	6	3		9	4

MENS OVER 50 REPORT



The England v Ireland rivalry has dominated the current over 50s vintage for the last 10 years. It was rumoured to have started in 2014 after a throwaway remark in a taxi by an anonymous England player to his Irish opponent after another 5-0 drubbing that, "you're actually only one good player away from being a decent squad". What followed was 3 consecutive Irish victories from 2015-2017, including a famous Irish victory on home soil in 2016. So, with

decent squads firmly in mind, the England team assembled in Dublin for the 2024 Home Internationals having stretched a long list of availability for what on paper looked to be an intriguing series.

First up on Friday afternoon was England v Wales with debuts for Adam Dominie and Chris Lynam, who both responded with comfortable victories, as did the rest of the team, eventually running out 5-0 winners. Show-court loomed on Saturday morning against a formidable Ireland team. The Selection Committee pondered over team order before asking Adam to play at 5th string, first up. Hoping his left-handed craftiness would upset the experienced, John Hurley, Adam duly responded with a gutsy performance, nearly stealing victory before Hurley prevailed 3-2.

Matt Stephenson, the seasoned Yorkshire veteran, was next up at 3rd string against former British Open champion, Dave Ayerst. Again, England found themselves leading 2-0 as Stephenson steadily worked his way towards an upset before Ayerst dug deep with an impressive come back to prevail 3-2.

At 2-0 down England needed a performance for the ages and even the most optimistic supporter would not have backed Mike Gregory to beat former world number 7, Derek Ryan, the current world masters over 50s champion. What followed was one of the most magnificent England masters squash performances, immortalised on PSA Squash TV via YouTube with adroit commentary from the heavier Staunton and Allen Barwise. Mike played with guts, passion and showcased his extraordinary talent to complete a fine 3-0 victory over a shell-shocked Ryan.

England now started to believe and next up at 4th string was Wayne Beglan on debut. Unfortunately, Wayne could not hold out a barnstorming Dara O'Flynn who steamed to a 3-0 win, giving Ireland an unassailable 3-1 lead overall. The tie ended up 3-2 to Ireland after another predictably heated Boyle v Rob Staunton encounter which went England's way, cementing the England v Ireland rivalry for many more seasons to come.

The afternoon fixture against Scotland was always going to be a banana skin after the disappointment of the morning. No one dared mention that the Scottish side was a mere player away from a decent squad but this time the England tail rallied with Chris and Wayne both convincing 3-0 winners. A tired Matt held Adrian Richmond at bay, winning 3-2, before Mike failed to complete what would have been a mouthwatering fixture against Simon Boughton, pulling up lame with achilles soreness at 1-1. Paul was soundly beaten by Keith Simpson 3-1, but England had won the tie, 3-2, and secured a very credible silver medal.



Onwards to the festivities at the Fitzwilliam Club where deserved Irish celebrations went long into the evening. My personal thanks to an England team that gave it their all and each contributed to another epic masters international weekend. May I also pay special thanks to the Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club for being outstanding hosts and, of course, Gerry Callanan and Brian Brock for organising us.

Paul Boyle
Team Captain

MENS OVER 70 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		17	17	18	52	1
	9		20	20	49	2
	7	4		16	27	3
	7	3	8		18	4

MENS OVER 70 REPORT

Match against Wales



First up was our match against the Welsh team. When I say “Welsh team” this was something of a mis-description at the scheduled start time of the match. The only Welsh player who had arrived was an understandably harassed looking Martin Vickery, busy looking for messages from his absent team mates.

To be fair to the Welsh team, the start time of the match had been put forward to 3.30 because of the demands on the courts caused by a PSA event going on at two of them.

Whether the absence of his team affected his play, or our England masters home internationals debutant, Robert (Bob) Houldsworth, was much too good for him anyway, Robert duly won 3-0 to get us off to a good start.

The order of play was not as scheduled, so next on was Andrew Edmondson who, like Robert, was playing his first match for England. He survived a come-back from Derek Wright to win 3-1.

At number 2 our captain, John Goodrich, beat Clive Morgan 3-0 to clinch the match 3-0. All going to plan. A good job that the three of us did win as the next two matches could not have been closer and neither went to script.

Geoff Redfern, not fully recovered from a cold he had been unable to shake off, played Kwesi Hazel, who loves taking the ball short. Geoff lost 10-12 in the fifth.

Last was our current over 70s British Open and British closed champion, Terry Belshaw. Terry won the first two games and seemed to be well in control before Tony Bevan hit a hot streak of blazing winners to come out on top by 12-10 in the fifth.

Match score 3-2 to England.

Match against Ireland

Ireland had beaten the Scottish team 5-0 on Friday so we expected that we would have a tough match and that the winner would be the overall winner.

Like the over 50s women's team, we had a cruel 9.30 am start time. This presented a challenge for the first players on the court, needing to balance their desire to eat plenty of the very tempting Mespil hotel breakfast and the risk a large meal soon before eating brings of feeling sluggish and nauseous on the court.

Showing true team commitment by eating a modest breakfast, Tony Pensom, playing first at number 5, got us off to a great start by beating Robert Garvin 3-1.

Next was Geoff Redfern. He had a see-sawing game against Pat Hurley, losing by 11-6 in the fifth.

Then Terry was up against the formidable Kyran Hurley who, last year, won the European over 70s without dropping a game. They had a close contest with Terry coming near to winning the first two games and winning the third before Kyran won the match 3-1.

So...1-2 and with our backs against the wall, both Bob Houldsworth and I had to win.

Bob, in very gutsy display, with the pressure all on us, won 3-2 against Martin Maher, by 11-6 in the fifth.

At number 2, playing against Robert Peel, I was particularly conscious of two things. One, that I was getting great encouragement and support from my team mates and other England supporting spectators. Two, that with the formidable record of our age group teams over the years, if I as captain had played the deciding match and lost it, a few people would not be slow to remind me of this! I (John Goodrich) won 3-0 for us to claim the match.

Match against Scotland

After starting slowly and losing the first game, at number 5, Andrew Edmondson came back to the next three games reasonably comfortably to get us off to a good start.

At number 3 Geoff Redfern, feeling the effects of his morning five setter, only got going in the third game. After saving several match points and having a game ball of his own, he lost that game 11-13 to lose the match 0-3.

Next was Terry Belshaw at number 1, playing his usual clever squash and wrong footing of his opponents, beat Emilio Fazzi 3-0.

Tony Pensom was at number 4 against Robert Thomson and we had another match that went all the way to a tie break in the fifth. Tony won his match by 12-10 and clinched the match against us in the process.

Last on, at number 2 against the British closed over 75s champion, Ian Ross, I (John Goodrich) still needed to win at least one game in order for the England team to win. Ireland had beaten Wales 5-0, so could still catch up with us on points and win on games count. I managed to beat a typically determined Ian by 3-1.

Our England team thus gained 52 to points to Ireland's 49, so squeezed home by the skin of our teeth. There had been so many close matches that managing to win overall felt particularly satisfying. We had certainly been tested.

Overall, the week-end

The party on Saturday evening made a fine end to the event, with a few sore heads on Sunday morning! The week-end, as with other Masters events, was a good opportunity to renew friendships and to make new ones.

With weather forecast defying sunshine, the excellent Mespil hotel that we stayed in, the facilities of the Fitzwilliam club, the shared purpose and pride in playing for our countries, the sportsmanship and friendly spirit that (almost all!) of the matches across the three age groups were played in, this was a magical week-end.

Thank you for everyone who makes these Home Internationals happen. The camaraderie and brilliant organisation of the England masters squash events has been a large factor in me and I suspect many others in continuing to play squash.

Thank you also to my team-mates, our spouses and all those who supported us.

John Goodrich
Team Captain

WOMENS OVER 50 RESULTS SUMMARY

Team					Total	Position
		20	20	19	59	1
	1		20	9	30	3
	0	1		2	3	4
	5	16	20		41	2

WOMENS OVER 50 REPORT



Friday Session 1 England vs Wales

First time appearance for Debbie Locke from Warwickshire, first time in Ireland representing the England team and as number five string for this match, Debbie was also first on court to play!!

No pressure!



Debbie came out super strong against a very able opponent from the Wales, Fiona Curthoys, who now lives in Canada, but like many on the Welsh squad, had been drafted in to strengthen the team! Despite very warm courts, Debbie was quick to adjust and got great length followed by clinical drop shots. First game to England 11-4!

Second game and the Welsh lady had been coached to push up the court, get forward for Debbie's drops. A little relaxed maybe? and surprised by the ease of the first game, Debbie was not as accurate with her width in the second and poked at a few drops that ended up in the tin, allowing feisty Fiona to take our English lady to a 10-10 tiebreak. Despite the captains' nerves on the balcony, Debbie did not appear to show any on court, she served with confidence and won the second game 12-10.

In the third game Debbie continued to dominate with good length and drop shot and had clearly put the Welsh lady under pressure, who kindly served out with match point against her! Allowing Debbie to win the first match 3-0. Super effort, 1-0 to England.

Second on at number 3 string, was last years' captain and the very experienced Sarah Parr, up against the equally talented and former England player that is Jill Champion. Playing down in age groups for the Welsh team, Jill was a champion at the lob serve/dominate the T, to put the opponent under pressure from the off, however Sarah was also accurate in returning the serve, powering it to the back and had a fabulous cross court volley drop nick! Bit of nerves from both in the first and some unforced errors from Sarah allowed Jill to take the first game 15-13 but we knew Sarah would not allow that to continue!

Sarah came back fighting in the second, driving the serve to the back and dominating the court, twisting, and turning Jill to take the second 11-7.

The third it was Jill's turn to take an early lead, again putting Sarah under pressure with her high lob serve that died in the back of the court if not volleyed. At 5-9 down the balcony were beginning to think the game was going to go to the Welsh but again Sarah's fighting spirit was having none of that and she played her cross-court volley drop shot off Jill's serve and the next five points in a row to take the third 11-9.

The fourth game was played very much like the first game, both ladies not giving the other an inch and playing to their strengths, winning one or two points in a row before going the other way, but the lob serve of Campion was too much for the Parr shoulder. Sarah felt something 'go' at around 9-9? And could not lift her racket properly to attack the next few shots. Sarah lost the fourth 11-9 to make it 2-2 and had to concede the fifth game and match, unfortunately retiring for the remainder of the weekend. We were all gutted for her!

Before all the drama of Sarah's match, the number one seeds had started on a second court. Chrissie McMullen our number two ranked player from Warrington, Cheshire, was up against the experienced and number one seed Helen Barnard of Wales, who like Jill Campion, was playing down her age group. Chrissie had been the statistician before the weekend, sharing squash levels, order of play and was keen to have the details sorted as we started on the adjacent court....

The first game was tight, going back and forth between the players as they got accustomed to the warm courts. In a battle of David and Goliath, Chrissie had to keep the ball tight to the walls and wide to the four corners and try and out manoeuvre the tall and dominating figure of Helen from the T. The game was close and could have gone either way as both ladies found their form, but Chrissie narrowly lost the first game 9-11.

In the second game Chrissie pushed forward, getting in front of Helen, covering any short drop or boast and quickly went 9-3 up however, in a bout of nerves from Chrissie? Helen had pegged her back to 9-9, surely Chrissie was not going to lose this one. No, Chrissie was clinical and took the second 11-9.

The two ladies were clearly talented and match experienced, McMullen went ahead 10-7 in the third, but the long Welsh reach of Barnard brought the game to 10-10 and tie break, Chrissie had to fight but took the third 13-11. In the fourth, the English Rose and the Welsh Daffodil went head-to-head 10-10, 11-11, 12-12. Chrissie had two match points, one at 11-10 but served out and again at 13-12, but Helen had the fire of the Welsh Dragon in her belly and took the fourth game 15-13. Two games all!

Chrissie went on for the final game, determined not to let the game go to a tiebreak. Like a pocket rocket, she sped round the court, was accurate and gave Helen no time to intercept her shots, 11-8 to McMullen. England 2-1 up! Next at fourth string, was captain Linda Pritchard against her Welsh friend Jill Griffiths. Nerves or friendliness from Pritchard, who knows, but the Welsh had come fighting and Jill seemed to have adjusted better to the warm courts and took an early lead 6-3. Pritchard relaxed and started playing, remembering she was a leftie playing a right hander, driving it down the Welsh lady's backhand and getting a better length and width, to pull the score back to within two points at 5-7 but was still behind. Change of tactics from the English player who decided to stop rallying and going medium pace? But went hard and low, driving the ball to the back, to take six points on the bounce and the first game 11-7.

The second game, Pritchard maintained the hard fast game, powering the ball to the back then a short drop tactics, giving no time on the ball to her Welsh opponent, taking the second game 11-1 and leaving her wondering what had just gone on....

The third game was similar, played hard and fast, Jill, slow to get her racket on the ball due to the pace was getting more and more frustrated with herself, mixing up her shots as Pritchard continued with length and covering the T for the Griffiths' boast. As the game and match was reaching the final points, and heading for an English victory, Griffiths resorted to the 'Welsh/ Campionesk' lob that unfortunately went down the middle of the court. As Linda swung to volley it to a winner, Jill had to stay out of the way, failing to get forward and cover the shot, but claimed 'an excessive' swing by the English captain. Pritchard was having none of it and seeing doubt in the referee,

confidently walked to the serve box to serve for the next point – friendships had been placed to one side for this one! Jill, disappointed, was a wilted daffodil from her mistake and Linda bloomed and took the third game and the match 11-5. Happy to say friendships remained, after outside of the court!

3-1 England Victory!!

With the match won, Louisa Dalwood from Hertfordshire, at second string could relax without the pressure of having to win the deciding match. Louisa was playing the number two Welsh seed Rhian Davies who had been improving and working hard on her game in south Wales. In the first game the Welsh again took an early lead, Rhian covering the middle of the court and managing to get her racket on to Louisa's cross shots and put them away at the front of the court, Rhian going 9-5 up. Maybe Louisa was being too relaxed? However, as with most of the English matches, Louisa quickly got rid of any first match nerves and started to play well and dominate. Who knows what it was with Louisa.... her being a fellow leftie and playing her strong forehand against the oppositions weaker backhand or the English lady remembering she had strong Irish connections with Dublin, this was her second home, and she was not going to lose? Whatever it was, Louisa like Sarah in her third game, came back with six straight winning rallies to take the first 11-9!

After Louisa's comeback in the first, Rhian seemed unsure how to respond. Louisa was much more confident, playing aggressively, driving the ball hard, fast, and low, not allowing Rhian to get any further into the match. Louisa swiftly took the second 11-2.

The Welsh team were strong in support on the balcony, but they could not give their Welsh number two the weapons to fend the whipping power from the Dalwood swing! Louisa was swift and clinical and took the third game 11-3 to give England the overall 4-1 win!! Super first day!

Saturday Session 2 England vs Ireland



Ireland on paper were the toughest opposition team and neither teams were happy for an early start and having to curtail the breakfast experience, forced to skip the full English at the Mespil hotel!

The original plan had been to play our strongest team, bringing in the resting Rachel Calver at one, but with Sarah Parr out injured, first timer Debbie had to fore go her breakfast as she once again went on court first.

Debbie Locke played Danielle Donohue and show no signs of nerves, was clinical and won 11-3, 11-6, 11-3. Growing in confidence with each match.

Louisa Dalwood was third string for this match against a strong Suzanne Swan of Ireland. Two similar styles, with accurate shots and some tactical rallies for possession of the T but Louisa was always the stronger and won 11-8, 11-2, 11-8.

Third on court was our number one seed Rachel Calver from Leicestershire, coming back from knee surgery to take on the Irish number one Orla Diamantino (O'Doherty), ex professional, who too entered the court, modelling a strapped knee!!



With Sarah retired, the English team were on the balcony with bated breath to see how Calver's knee would perform under the variety of shot that Diamantino had within her arsenal! And hoping Rachel had done all her exercises, warming up properly in the gym (as we all do)?

The ladies are clearly super experienced, talented shot players, and the game went back and forth as they both tried to find their length and short game and adjust to the warm courts. At 9-9 and after a few nervy shots from both ladies, Rachel putting a couple in the tin, Calver finally got her range and took the first game 11-9. With confidence in her movement around court and knee, Rachel controlled the T and took the second comfortably 11-4, putting Orla under pressure with her accuracy and shot selection.

In the third, super tight balls were being played down the wall on the backhand side and both ladies were moving well but it was England's Calver who was always able to play an even tighter shot be it length, cross court or drop against the Irish number one and Orla eventually gave up chasing them down. 11-2 and match to Calver. England 3-0 and the match won.

Captain Pritchard went on at fourth string against Jennifer Dillon, playing with confidence until a wobble at 10-5 in the first. Allowed the Irish lady to get it back to 9-10 but was able to close it out 11-9. The next two games won more easily 11-5, 11-7. 3-0 overall and the team 4-0 up.

Chrissie McMullen playing at second string this time against Rachel McNulty, went on with a more relaxed manner and similarly to Pritchard, was up in the first 10-7 but managed to lose the first game 12-10. Chrissie came back fighting in the next determined not to let that happen again and won the next three games 11-4, 12-10, 11-7, to win her match 3-1.

England 5 Ireland 0

Saturday Session 3 England vs Scotland

Parr and Pritchard, former and current captains of the English ladies over 50s team had lost the trophy to Scotland the past two years and were determined to win it back in Dublin. Despite the Scots fielding a weaker team and jokingly requesting that England played with the lower of the six players, Parr and Pritchard were having none of it.

All ladies were sporting but professional and got the job done winning comfortably each string 3-0:

Debbie Locke v Joanne O'Leary 11-1, 11-4, 11-4

Louisa Dalwood v Jennifer McCartney 11-4, 11-2, 11-1

Rachel Calver v Julia Horsburgh 11-3, 11-2, 11-3

Linda Pritchard v Bernie Beattie 11-5, 11-2, 11-2

Chrissie McMullen v Donna Cruickshank 11-4, 11-3, 11-8

Super weekend of squash. Dinner, dancing, and drinks thoroughly deserved and enjoyed Saturday evening.



Well done Sarah for continuing to support the team and mark matches with an injured and very painful shoulder, to Debbie for playing so confidently in her first debut weekend wearing the England kit and our 'young pups' as a Welshman described them, Rachel, Louisa, and Chrissie for bringing greater strength and depth to the team!

Linda Pritchard
Team Captain

