

Tennis Club Championship Finals

The ALTC finals took place on a perfect September day at the club's Balksbury home.

Guest of Honour was ex-member Andrew Moraghan, who left the club to join the European Senior professional Tour. This has taken him all over Europe and given him a lot of material for his blog, 'Oldmanontour', including a Winter spent at Rafael Nadal's Tennis Centre on Majorca. He has been back in the UK gaining a financial Master's degree from Loughborough University but is returning to the Tennis Circuit soon in Europe and also South America.

He enjoyed entertaining matches all day, starting with the Men's Singles. This pitted young club member Jacob Webb against Club Coach Josh Gook. Jacob had scored a very good win against last year's winner, Al Williams, in the semi-final.

Josh is nationally rated and plays for Hampshire at the highest level.

The first rally of the match found both players striking the ball well,

each of them aiming to make an opening but it was Josh who made the winning shot. The greater experience proved crucial and Josh maintained a very high level of consistency, with power when necessary. Jacob played well throughout and it was a very good match to watch. The final score of 6-0, 6-0 to Josh does not give credit to Jacob's part in an entertaining match of consistent high quality.



Josh Gook, Alex Lee (LTA Umpire) and Jacob Webb

The ladies Singles was next on the programme, with Flavia Zamfir, playing Elena Clarke. Flavia may have been the youngest player in the adult finals but not the least experienced. She won the Hampshire Road to Wimbledon competition and did play at the All England Club earlier this year. Elena was part of an elite training group as a youngster in Russia but would like to get more singles play now and was looking forward to playing her young opponent.



The weather continued to please and so did this match with both ladies aiming to win points with powerful ground strokes. The opening exchanges went Flavia's way but Elena plays a determined game and she was giving as good as she got in exciting rallies. Flavia has a graceful ease to her shot making at its best and she took a 4-0 lead and won the first set 6-2.

Elena was not downcast and fought back with powerful forehands and backhands and more sting in her serve. She also came to the net more. She was relishing the task, which is always great to see.

Singles makes much greater demands on your movement, not only in positioning yourself for good ball striking but in court coverage and Flavia managed this a little better and also won the second set 6-1 to take the match and become the youngest winner of the Ladies Singles.

The Ladies Doubles followed with the established pairing of Claire Reid and Fay Fradley taking on Jennie Pope and new member Kath Norton. In the first rally there was a long baseline exchange and then some close quarter volleying...we were in for a competitive match

with both pairs concentrating and hitting well. Claire likes to rally from the baseline while Fay is very happy volleying no matter how hard the shot.

However Jennie can rally as well so there was a lot of court coverage as each point was contested. Kath Norton



proved a decisive influence as she pushed Claire and Fay back with powerful drives and made firm winning volleys. The match went with serve until Jennie and Kath broke and won the first set 7-5. The second set went very much the same way with all four ladies playing good tennis and all enjoying the tight exchanges. The important break went to Jennie and Kath who took the set 6-3 to win their first title.

*Ladies Doubles Winners; Jennie Pope and
Kath Norton with Guest of Honour Andrew Moraghan*

The Men's doubles was next and this featured defending champions Andrew Winnett and Martyn Isherwood against Al Williams and John



Cadwell. Al is the current Army Veteran's singles champion and his positive attitude and forceful dynamic play always make life difficult for his opponents. He was keen to avoid a repeat of the last two years when he has missed out on this title in a deciding tie break. John and he were clear in their objective to take command of the net from the start. This is the classic way to win at doubles and Andrew and Martyn had the

same plan. All four players have good volleys, resulting in a game of rapid fire exchanges.

In the first set Martyn showed that he deserved his reputation as the best vollyer in the club and he managed to find the winning shot on many occasions and when forced back, produced some exceptional groundstrokes. Andrew also made good volleys and retrieved impossible shots so that they kept their noses in front and took the first set 6-4.

In the second set Al and John redoubled their efforts taking a 5-2 lead with dynamic, forceful play. The balance then shifted and Martyn and Andrew pulled it back to 5-5 and then 6-5. But Al and John were determined and forced a tie break which they won to finally take the set.

In the deciding tie break it was Martyn and Andrew who started well and although Al and John stayed in the game to the end, Martyn and Andrew just got home 10-8, to retain their title.

The last match of the day was the Mixed Doubles.

Claire Coomer and Andrew Winnett have won the title fourteen times and always start as favourites, both being talented players and also having a great tennis understanding.

Standing in the way of a fifteenth win were Kate Gailey and singles finalist Jacob Webb, who are both in their best form. Jacob was determined to prove himself, and he and Kate took an early lead with strong accurate groundstrokes and winning volleys and maintained it to take the set 6-2.



When Claire and Andrew took the first two games of the second set, it looked as though normal service was resumed but a couple of uncharacteristic errors when leading took the score to 2-1 instead of 3-0 and Jacob and Kate were back in the set. They made the most of their chance to break serve and win the set 6-3 to take a well-deserved first title.

It was a great finish to a splendid day of wonderful weather, conviviality and good tennis.