

The annual curtain raiser to the Southend and District Badminton season, the Reg Harris Shield, took place at Westcliff High School for Boys on Sunday. The tournament saw ten pairings enter in the Ladies handicap event and sixteen pairings for the Men's handicap.

The Ladies event was divided into two groups of five with two games to 21 points. In Group A of the Ladies, Lucy Downey and Natalie Smith (-16) cruised to top spot as they won all eight games with Sarah Hall and Caroline Fletcher (Scr) coming closest to beating them, losing to 16 and 19. The fight for runners-up spot was between Sara Thompson and Vikki Walker (Scr) and Debbie Moon and Dawn Muggleton (Scr). The latter prevailed as despite both winning four games out of eight, Debbie and Dawn secured six more points.

In Group B, Tamsin Collinge and Wendy Hyde (-4) picked up seven games out of eight to win the group. The only loss they had was against Mandie Breed and Tracey Haylett (-7), 21-19. Mandie and Tracey took second spot as they won five out of eight which was enough to keep them above Carla Baylis-McDonagh and Roxy Wickes (-3) and Anne Wallis and Kana Hazlewood (+8) who both won three.

Lucy and Natalie kept up their fine form from the group as they beat Mandie and Tracey 21-14, 21-13 in the first semi-final. The other clash was also settled in straight sets but a very tight second one as Tamsin and Wendy beat Debbie and Dawn 21-11, 21-20. The final was also settled in straight sets as Lucy and Natalie completed an unbeaten afternoon by comfortably winning 21-12, 21-13 to claim the shield.

The Men's event had two groups of eight with just one game to 21 points. Those with the higher handicaps in Group A came to the fore with James Allpress and Lewis Barr (-18) topping the group after six wins from seven. Their only defeat came against the eventual runners-up in the group in David Virgo and Peter Brumwell (-9) who also won six out of seven but finished second on points. Paul Hyde and Nick Harbott (-13), Tom Kirby and Matt Tonge (-4) and Alan Gibbens and Andrew Brown (-11) all won four and just missed out.

Group B was a much tighter affair but yet again a pair that won six out of seven won the group. Ian Moorcroft and Adam Dixon Peters (+1) lost just once despite their low handicap. Three pairs entered the final game of the group on four wins in Wayne Fogg and Daniel Potter (-7), Ben Bradford and Harris Foster-Carter (-4) and Michael and David Clark (-8). Wayne and Daniel beat Ben and Harris 21-18 and that coupled with Michael and David losing meant five wins sent them through to the semi-finals.

James and Lewis edged past Wayne and Daniel in the first semi-final, 21-18, and they were joined in the final by fellow Group A pairing David and Peter as they triumphed 21-13 against Adam and Ian. The final was a best of three sets encounter but they weren't needed as James and Lewis took revenge for the group stage defeat to David and Peter by beating them 21-17, 21-19 with some terrific rallies and shots on show from both pairs. A deserved win for James and Lewis whose only defeat was the very first game of the group stage.