



PRESS RELEASE

Nottingham triumphant in BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Championships

Vauxhall Holiday Park, Great Yarmouth was treated to an extravaganza of pool as University of Nottingham emerged victorious in the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Team Championship with an emphatic performance against University of Bath in the final. The BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Individual Championship, with almost 450 entrants, was fiercely contested culminating with Alex Thomson (Cardiff) defeating Lewis Ronaldson (Chester) in an engrossing final.

In the UPC Women's Eight-ball Pool Championships, Oxford University resumed their dominance in this competition as they overcame the spirited Durham University 2nd team in a keenly contested final. Jo Lenthall (Nottingham) got the better of Hannah Smith (Oxford) to become the UPC Women's Individual Champion.

The format of the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Championships lies in accordance with all BUCS sporting events. In the Team Championship/Trophy, there were eight groups of five teams with the two best-placed first teams going forward to compete in the Last-16 of the Championship. The best-placed team not qualifying for the Championship went forward to challenge for the Team Trophy whilst the bottom placed team faced relegation to the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Shield in 2013-2014. There was clearly a lot to play for!

Championship/Trophy - Groups

With the groups being seeded based on previous performances, there were few upsets as most of those fancying their chances of contending for the title qualified.

Defending champions York 1st arrived on the east coast with hopes that their pre-tournament polishing of the trophy would be for their ongoing benefit and this was consolidated by an unbeaten start in their group. Manchester Met 1st got the better of Reading 1st in their opening match and this set the tone for the remaining fixtures, with Manchester Met 1st qualifying for a Championship berth and Cambridge 1st moving through to the Trophy.

Nottingham 1st, previous winners of this event, emerged from Group B unscathed. Lancaster 2nd, demonstrating the growing pool club infrastructure at the university, qualified for the Trophy in second place with Essex 1st securing the other Championship berth in a rare end-of-group shootout, after sharing an identical group performance with Abertay 1st.

Plymouth 1st got underway with a positive start in topping Group C. Their south coast counterparts Portsmouth 1st made steady progress with brief ambitions of qualifying in top slot but in this format the tables can turn very quickly. In a crunch final match, they became unstuck against Warwick 1st, which saw Warwick go through to the Championship and Portsmouth participating in the Trophy.

When the draw was released, Group D was identified as the 'group of death' with first teams from Ulster, Strathclyde, Cardiff and Oxford all competing for the championship slots. Although Ulster did not have things all their own way, they topped the group with Oxford 1st also qualifying. In the final match, the UPC Nine-ball Champions Strathclyde got the better of Cardiff to pinch the trophy berth and end Cardiff's campaign.

Manchester 1st, who have demonstrated pedigree in this event by consistently being involved at the 'business' end on Sunday, dominated Group E to qualify comfortably and they were joined by Queens 1st. Southampton 1st, who have consistently proven their cuesport pedigree in the BUCS Snooker Championships, added another string to their bow in claiming a place in the Trophy.

Edge Hill University, captained by reigning BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Individual Champion Rhys Williams, and with a restructured team after the graduation of key player Will Jerram, topped Group F. Glamorgan 1st posted a spirited group performance to carry Welsh hopes through to the Championship knockout phase as Durham 1st secured the Trophy berth.

Exeter 1st, after a positive record in this event in recent times, got off to an impressive start by comfortably winning Group G. Bath 1st, who have grown positively as a club in the past three seasons, got the better of St Andrew 1st to progress to the Championship.

Championship/Trophy - Knockout Phase

Championship

As play commenced on Sunday, tension in the arena of the Regency Room tangibly increased with the knowledge that any defeat now would lead to the ignition of the team's minibus for the trip home!

With nearly all matches at the Last-16 stage being close contests, it demonstrated that the race to the Championship title was a wide-open affair.

Exeter continued their fine group form with an assured performance against Oxford. In a battle of former winners, Nottingham edged out Queen's University, Belfast in the shootout after the teams could not be separated after two legs of the match.

York got the better of Edge Hill in a keenly fought encounter to maintain their title defence as Plymouth 1st (Shield winners in 2011-12) powered through against UEA 1st, ending hopes of a local university win.

Although it required a tense play-off, Lancaster had too much for Warwick in the end as Manchester also progressed to the Last-16 at the expense of Essex.

Glamorgan, the only Welsh outfit in the knockout phase, triumphed over Manchester Met 1st. The shock of the round was arguably Bath's victory over much fancied Ulster, but, by all accounts, were good value for their win.

With a mouth-watering quarter-final line up in place, Lancaster, with their passion intensifying and volume of their support rising, enhanced their hopes of winning the Championship by dispatching Glamorgan with aplomb. Bath had to dig deep to edge Manchester in a thrilling shoot-out decider as previous winners Nottingham and York overcame Exeter and Plymouth respectively to complete the semi-final line up.

With all to play for and every frame being critical, the two semi-finals proved to be tense affairs. In the first semi-final, Bath and Lancaster were locked at 4-4 with both frames in the balance. After many shifts in momentum, the final frames were ultimately shared to send it to a play-off. Kyle Selmen, on an untouchable 100% record at the time of his frame, proved to be the difference as he sunk the winning black to send Bath to their first final.

Turning attention to the other semi-final, York and Nottingham, two teams who have been in this position before, didn't make it look as if the pressure was any easier to deal with! In testament to the competitiveness of this year's competition, the shoot-out section on the team card was called for again as Nottingham ultimately ended York's dreams of retaining their title.

In a pressure cooker final that brought these two fine sides together, Nottingham and Bath traded early frames to leave the match nicely poised as the nerves began to settle and the frame-victory cheers were getting louder. Nottingham asserted their authority in a pivotal mid-section and although Bath briefly rallied, through Selman and captain Martin Rowland, Nottingham were not to be denied as talisman Chris 'The Colonel' Hobbis sunk the winning eight-ball to bring home their second title in three years.

Trophy

In the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Team Trophy, Durham 1st contested the final against Lancaster 2nd. Durham, who demonstrated a great team spirit throughout, got the better of Lancaster to pick up the Trophy in a close encounter.

Shield

The BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Shield provides a platform for new teams to compete alongside current teams that are not of Championship/Trophy status.

Kent 1st, relegated from Championship/Trophy level last season but returning to Great Yarmouth with high aspirations instilled by captain Ben Hubbard, and Sheffield 3rd, adding to an impressive outing for their pool club at the UPC Nine-ball Pool Championships in Liverpool, reached the final.

In the end, Kent had too much in their armoury for Sheffield to cope with and, after a one-sided final, Hubbard was delighted to hold the Team Shield trophy aloft on behalf of Kent.

Individual Championship

In the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Individual Championship, Rhys Williams (Edge Hill) arrived at Great Yarmouth determined to retain his title. Although he made light work of his first opponent when he entered the draw with the other seeds in the Last-128, his journey in this defence was short and not so sweet as Chris Stapleton (Nottingham) got the better of him in the Last-64.

The early departure of Williams set the tone for a series of potentially unexpected results. Much fancied former champion Rich Wharton also slipped out at this early stage, with Joseph Simons getting the better of the 2007/08 champion.

With almost 450 names in the hat at the start of play on Thursday, still being involved at the latter stages on Saturday evening represented a fantastic achievement. In arguably the most open tournament ever, last year's runner-up Thomas Gaughan (Exeter) again made impressive strides towards the semi-finals alongside three experienced university pool participants in the shape of Alex Thomson (Cardiff), Lewis Ronaldson (Chester) and Tom Barrett (Nottingham).

In the first semi-final, Lewis Ronaldson settled his early nerves and gained a strong foothold in the match against Thomas Gaughan. When Ronaldson missed a chance to soar into a 4-0 lead, Gaughan was sparked into life and brought the match to a final frame decider. In a tactical exchange, Ronaldson gobbled up his chance to secure his final berth. In the other semi-final, Alex Thomson and Tom Barrett shared the opening exchanges before Thomson seized the initiative to book his place against Ronaldson in the final.

With around 150 spectators, the individual final proved to be a dramatic affair with the magnitude of the occasion dawning on both players.

As they both settled into the match, it was a tit-for-tat affair with frames exchanged without either player able to gain more than a one frame lead. Although Thomson remained in touching distance, it was Ronaldson who reached the hill first. When Ronaldson extracted a foul, the opportunity to take the title was in his grasp but as it slipped away, a composed Thomson took the match to hill-hill. Both players had a chance at the table but when Ronaldson narrowly over-ran on a snooker attempt, Thomson had the title at his mercy and he duly sunk a long eight-ball to become the first student from a Welsh university to become the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Individual Champion.

Women's Team Championships

Group Stage

With two groups of six playing their respective group opponents once, the top three teams progressed to the knock-out phase across both groups.

In Group A, Oxford 1st accelerated out of the blocks with two landslide victories providing them with the platform to top the group. Oxford 3rd demonstrated the consistent strength in depth at the university by finishing in the runner-up berth. Nottingham 1st joined them in the knockout phase, with a marginally better record than Durham 1st.

In Group B, Durham 2nd outperformed their 1st team, with a series of impressive results in an unbeaten group performance. Oxford 2nd completed the full complement of Oxford teams qualifying and were joined by Manchester Met 1st in the progression to the knockout phase.

Knockout Phase

With places in the knockout phase allocated by group places, Oxford 2nd were pitted against Nottingham 1st and Oxford 3rd faced Manchester Met 1st.

Oxford 2nd got the better of Nottingham 1st to secure a semi-final against their first team but Manchester Met 1st ended any hopes of a full house of Oxford teams in the semi-final as they progressed at their expense to play Durham 2nd.

In the semi finals, Durham 2nd continued their strong run by overcoming Manchester Met 1st in a final frame shootout and Oxford 1st avoided an internal bragging rights scare as they narrowly beat their own 2nd team by the same margin.

In the final, Durham 2nd and Oxford 1st traded frames with both holding high hopes of becoming the first team to win this Championship in the Great Yarmouth setting. In accordance with the pattern emerging in the latter stages of this year's event, a shootout was again required as Oxford 1st retained their title in impressive style but much credit should be given to Durham 2nd for their impressive showing.

Women's Individual Championship

In the UPC Women's Eight-ball Pool Individual Championship, Jo Lenthall (Nottingham) got the better of Hannah Smith (Oxford) in a one-sided final to secure her first university title.

Next Event

Attention now switches to the Student Home Internationals in Glasgow on 19th-20th April 2013.

8th April 2013

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Notes to editors:

The Universities Pool Council (UPC) is the governing body for pool at higher education level in the United Kingdom. It is recognised by the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS), Scottish University Sport (SUS) and the English Pool Association (EPA).

The UPC organises national nine-ball, eight-ball and women's eight-ball pool championships for teams and individuals. The UPC also organises the Student Eight-ball Pool Home Internationals representative event.
