

TABLE TENNIS SOUTH CANTERBURY INC

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SOUTH CANTERBURY RESIDENTIAL CHAMPS

The South Canterbury residential singles titles were decided on Monday night. Strong favourite in the Men's Open after his unbeaten run in the division competition and only 3 losses overall for the season was Mike Stapp, while in the women's Louise Sandri was heavily favoured to win her 13th title. In the second division top seed Paul Butler faced strong competition from John Fox and James Winchester while in the third division the men's favourite was Stu Falconer and the women's top seed was Lynette Smith.

The race for the semi-finals in the men's open event went according to seedings with Stapp playing Edward Winchester in one semi and last year's champion, and second seed, Tim Underdown playing Neil Keenan in the other. Keenan, fresh from his win over Underdown on the final night of the team's competition the previous week, continued his fine end of season form with a comfortable win over Underdown in 5 games 11-4, 11-7, 11-3, 7-11, 11-7 to make his first final.

After suffering two heavy defeats to Stapp during the regular season Winchester came out blazing in the other match and took the early lead winning the first game 11-6. Stapp fought back from being behind in the second to claim it 11-9 but fell behind again after losing the third game 8-11. In a match of mistakes and tentative play from both it was Stapp who took the ascendancy by winning the next two games 11-7, 11-8 but found himself down 8-10 in the next before rallying to win this game 12-10 and progress to his third straight final.

In the final Keenan was on fire in the first game winning it 11-2 and although Stapp started to comeback in the next Keenan took this 11-9 to go 2 up in the best of 7. Down 4-6 in the third Stapp, when reaching for a shot close to the floor, had the misfortune to stand on his bat and break the handle. He resumed after borrowing a bat from Tim Underdown however it looked an uphill battle to get back into the match with an unfamiliar bat. Stapp switched to a purely defensive mode of just getting the ball back and this seemed to unsettle Keenan who became tentative and reluctant to continue his attacking game. Stapp won the third game 11-8 and the fourth 11-7 to level it up at 2-2. The crucial fifth game was a seesaw one with both players taking a good lead then losing it however Stapp continued his strong defensive game and went ahead by winning this game 11-9. Keenan tried to get back into attacking mode however his rhythm had been lost and although he had game points at 10-8 to take the match to a decider it was Stapp who held his nerve to win the game 12-10 and take his second title.

Louise Sandri made no race of the women's title by defeating all opponents comfortably with Gill Underdown finishing second and Debbie Willet third.

In the second division the top three seeds, Paul Butler, John Fox and James Winchester made it through to the semi finals. 8th seed Brett Clifford upset calculations by beating 4th seed Ron Winchester to make the semi's and then dominated second seed Fox 11-7, 11-8, 11-9, 5-11, 11-7 to make his first final. Winchester was similarly dominant in the other match to comfortably beat Butler 12-10, 11-0, 9-11, 11-6, 11-9 to also make his first final. In the final Clifford snatched the first game 13-11 however Winchester then took control to win the final 11-13, 11-5, 11-4, 11-3, 11-6.

The third division top seed Falconer continued his great form to ease to a straight game win over Peter Adolph in one semi 11-5, 11-6, 11-4, 12-10 while 4th seed Jessi Drake also won in straight games over 2nd seed David Carey 11-9, 11-6, 11-8, 11-9. Falconer and Drake were teammates during the team's competition and had therefore not played each other prior to the final. Falconer took the first two games comfortably 11-6, 11-7. He also took the third game 13-11 but Drake was showing signs of working his way into the game. This proved the case with Drake taking the next 2 games 11-9, 13-11 however the fight back came to an end with Falconer claiming the next game 11-9 and his first title.

Lynette Smith won the Women's Third Division title for the second year running by defeating Janet Doran 14-12, 11-5, 11-8.