

Five Counties' Squash Festival

October 2009 - Last weekend saw the annual team squash festival at Strings in Tewkesbury for the under 11 and under 13 teams from the five counties of Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Avon and Oxfordshire. For the first time the event was played with a new format of each age group being played out on one day with the under 13s on Saturday and the under 11s on Sunday.

The under 13 holders, Gloucestershire were without their No.2 who had broken a finger during the week, and also their No.5, so their first match against a talented Avon team was always going to be tough. First up, playing at No.5 was Ross Barnes who gained a comprehensive 3-0 victory over Toby Harding and Alex Lane (No.3) against Ben Joyce. Alex lost the first game before levelling at 1-1, but Ben came back to take the 3rd, Alex dug deep and took the 4th and 5th games for a well deserved win over an excellent opponent whom he had lost to only two weeks beforehand. Lewis Taylor playing at No.4 played well to win 3-0 and with it the tie, a big relief as the Avon Nos 1 & 2 (Ellie Epke and Roshan Yau) proved too strong for Louis Penkett and Ryan Wilson. The following two ties for Gloucestershire against Worcestershire and Oxfordshire were routine with the Gloucestershire team winning both 5-0 so onto the final match against Warwickshire. Warwickshire had fought hard against Avon and although Avon had won 4-1 the Gloucestershire boys knew it would be difficult. First up again were Ross and Alex, and again Ross won 3-0 and again Alex came back from 1-2 down to win in five! Lewis dropped his only game of the tournament and Nos 1 & 2 Louis and Ryan both won 3-0 and with it the title stayed with Gloucestershire.

At the under 11 tournament on Sunday Oxfordshire sadly withdrew late on Friday leaving it as a 'four county tournament'. For many players this is the first time they have competed for their county and that was certainly the case for a young and inexperienced Gloucestershire team. First up for the Gloucestershire team were Worcestershire, all were nervous but the home side (that included a girl, Carys Jones, at No.2) soon settled and all went on to win without dropping a game. Then came Warwickshire, who had beaten Avon in a competitive 5-0. Warwickshire were strong and showed Gloucestershire's inexperience and although the No. 5 Angus McBryde took a game and the No.1 Aaron Woodward won his match Warwickshire were just too good on the day. Warwickshire went on to beat Worcestershire 5-0 and win the title with Gloucestershire beating Avon 4-1 for the runners up spot.

There is an overall trophy given for the best county over the two age groups, this was won by Gloucestershire with 144 points over Warwickshire with 128 points.

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