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'Green' retained despite Ellis heroics

by Rob Turville

IT WAS an impressively emphatic margin of victory – Guernsey 69, Jersey 41.

The home side dominated the Channel Islands team events, just as they had eagerly walked away with 14 of the 18 CI individual titles the previous night.

'What a fantastic result,' beamed Guernsey Table Tennis Association president Derek Webb as he relaxed with a celebratory pint afterwards.

'We lost only two team matches. The two draws meant that we retained those trophies. Three years ago Jersey would have beaten us easily in the junior matches, but now we have walked it.'

Last year, with one fewer match, the Sarnians won the Horace Mallett Memorial Trophy – for overall aggregate score – 63-37. This was another hammering: Horace would have loved it.

'I'm more than happy,' said Webb. 'I'm made up.'

The one slight, and it was slight, disappointment was that a Eugene Ellis-inspired Jersey fought back in the Green Trophy – the senior men's match – to scrape a 5-5 draw.

Guernsey looked in control at 3-1 and then 5-3 up – winning that fifth game guaranteed at least a draw and so the trophy was retained anyway – but the visitors and especially man of the match Ellis dug in and ground out the wins.

Their Caesarean celebration when Ellis grabbed that final point from Phil Ogier spoke volumes: they saw a draw as a win.

Guernsey's trio – Ogier, newly-crowned Channel Islands champion Peter Bretel and new Green Trophy cap Jez Powell – deserved great credit for their efforts at the end of two draining days, but at times did not fire on all cylinders.

'That often happens in the team matches,' said team manager Phil Hunkin.

'You don't always get the same result as the individual

matches. In fact, the CI champions usually lose the inter-insulars.'

Ogier and Ellis produced a fine match to end the night.

The 45-year-old Jerseyman has an idiosyncratic style, all fast twitches and grimaces, which should not disguise the fact that he is a fine table tennis player.

Ogier, possibly the best retriever of seemingly lost points in the local game, again pulled out his best shots of the evening against his long-time opponent.

At times Ellis was astonished that Ogier not only reached his attempted kill but returned it to win the point.

However, luck smiled on Ellis: valuable points won with net cords that dropped onto Ogier's side of the table.

Jersey were playing for pride; they knew the Green was out of reach and Ellis provided welcome relief after the Sarnian domination earlier in the day.

The morning session yielded three victories for Guernsey; the under-15s was especially comprehensive as Gary Dodd, Ryan Perry and Bethany Pipet chalked up a 9-1 win.

At lunch, the home side was comfortably ahead in the hunt for the aggregate trophy.

Wins at under-13 open, the women and that under-15 success outweighed Jersey's only two wins of the day, at veteran and under-21 level.

In the afternoon there followed success upon success: under-11 boys, under-18 boys, veterans over-40 and veterans over-60. The under-18 girls' match was drawn, Guernsey retaining the Rosemary Trophy.

Those matches – 34-16 in favour of Guernsey – put the home side 64-36 up and they knew the aggregate was theirs.

And so to the evening's showcase.

'The priority this morning was to come into the Green Trophy with the aggregate trophy in the bag. And we did, comfortably,' said Webb.

Guernsey blooded Jez Powell and he responded in fine fashion. Against Ellis in his first match, he made the Jersey champion work hard and pinched the third game.

Ogier levelled the match score with a straight games defeat of Paul Marshall and Peter Bretel took Guernsey ahead, defeating an admirably sporting Tom Quinn in four.

At a tense moment in the match, Quinn immediately acknowledged that a Bretel shot had nicked the tiniest fraction of the edge of the table and won the point for the Guernseyman.

Powell then got his name on the scoresheet with a defeat of Marshall and Guernsey were storming ahead 3-1.

Then it all went flat.

Bretel lost to Ellis in three tight games in a repeat of the CI men's singles final of the previous evening in which the Guernseyman triumphed.

The doubles was over in no time, too, Guernsey failing to hit

any kind of rhythm.

Ogier stopped the slide with a fine win against Quinn and Bretel then held his nerve to secure the Green Trophy with a tough defeat of Marshall, the Guernseyman rediscovering the form that had slipped temporarily earlier in the evening.

Jersey had to win the last two matches to grab a draw and Quinn and then Ellis did so, both in tight contests.

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Transformed Bretel destroys champion

by Rob Batiste

PETER BRETTEL, the newly-crowned Channel Islands men's singles champion, has undergone a spectacular transformation.

Gone is the long hair to be replaced by a shaven head and, most crucially, gone is the tension which had held him back from reaching the very top of the CI game.

A month short of his 30th birthday, Bretel blew away Jersey champion Eugene Ellis in five sets at the Guernsey Bowls Stadium with a wonderful display of attacking table tennis.

'I always felt confident because of the type of game I'm playing now,' admitted Bretel, who had former champion Phil Ogier in his corner.

'I knew he'd go flat out attack – so I knew the ball's going to come in fast and spinning. I had to serve tight to him.'

Ogier said the game-plan had worked a treat.

'I told him he had to dominate the game and not let Eugene in,' said Ogier as only a yard or so away Bretel accepted the congratulations from fellow players in both islands.

Rallies were short and very sharp as the two finalists went onto the attack.

Bretel took the first of the best-of-seven final 14-12 but the Jerseyman, who was to appear in five CI finals on a hectic evening for the left-hander, hit back to level in the second. From 5-5 in the third Bretel raced to an 11-8 game and a 2-1 lead, which he soon made 3-1 by taking the fourth 11-6. Ellis, champion in 1990, 2001 and 2003, was struggling to cope with the Bretel serve and no sooner had he returned to the table he found himself 0-5 down.

The Jerseyman won back a couple of points but Bretel then won three in a row to lead 9-2 and be just two points from the title.

Ellis dug deep and got it back to 8-10, but the Guernseyman allowed him no further and took the next for the trophy on a fantastic night for the locals.

The greens won 14 of the 18 CI finals and nobody was more successful than Dawn Morgan and Scott Romeril.

Morgan won three trophies, including the singles at Kay Lefevre's expense, while Romeril won four, including three individual successes through the age scales.

Alice Loveridge, just nine, also played well above her age to land both the under-15 and under-18 cups.

There was also a celebratory title for Matthew Stubbington on his 11th birthday.