

Young pretenders make step up to the throne

by Rob Batiste

SIX island titles for Alice Loveridge and a breakthrough men's singles title for Scott Romeril.

No wonder Guernsey Table Tennis Association officials were beaming with a mixture of pride and pleasure on finals night at their superb centre.

Never before, it is thought, have two players so young walked away with the blue riband championships and the fashion in which they did so was remarkable.

In any normal year, Loveridge's achievement would take the top honours. The 12-year-old swept aside Dawn Morgan, whose island singles successes number double figures, in four straight sets.

'That was the one I wanted to win most,' said the Year 8 Grammar student. But two tables away, Romeril, 17, was destroying six-times champion Phil Ogier in even more emphatic fashion.

Ogier, the defending champion, was blown away at the loss of 20 points over four games.

'That was absolutely awesome,' said a watching Mark Pipet, the daddy of former champions.

'He was picking up the ball so well and hitting it so cleanly.

'He was a man on a mission. He was really focused.'

Ogier hardly knew what hit him and said he was not in the game enough to know whether he was playing well or not.

Romeril, who now plays Jersey's Polish champion Marcin Jurkiewicz for the CI title on Friday, simply blew him away.

The youngster said he had been nervous all day, but did not show it in front of the Bailiff, Geoffrey Rowland and his wife, Diana.

'This is the one I wanted, big time,' said the new champion.

'We think it was in 1981 that Ian Powell won it for the first time, so if that is the case he would have been a similar age to Scott,' said GTTA head Derek Webb.

By the end of the night, Romeril had added three more titles.

Twice he got the better of the talented Garry Dodd in the under-18 and under-21 singles and the pair teamed up to destroy Ogier and Peter Bretel in the men's doubles.

Loveridge went two better and it seemed she was in action for the whole four hours plus it took to roll through the 18 finals.

Her only defeat from seven showdowns came in the under-18 open doubles where, partnered by Adam Langlois, they lost in seven to Dodd and Liam Robilliard.

But while not quite good enough to win that age-group title, Loveridge and young Adam were in the open mixed doubles where they edged past Dodd and Sam Kershaw in the deciding set.

The evening left GTTA president Webb even more bubbly than usual.

'It's just a new era for us and I don't think we will ever have multiple [singles] champions like the past. Those days have gone because we have so much talent coming through.'