

# Junior British league Table Tennis

## Britannia Boys Qualifiers Grantham 16<sup>th</sup> July 2016

JBL is a prestigious yearly league covering the whole of the UK and open to clubs entering a team of under 18's. Prospective teams need to qualify first on a knockout basis within a group, just 5 teams (out of 32 entrants) would go through this year. Once in the league and assigned a division, matches take place via two weekends in Derby and like any league, teams can go up or down (or out).

Last year, Britannia entered a boys team which did extremely well but not enough to qualify, this year Britannia boys team comprised Kian Burgess (Lowestoft), James Davies-Stokes (Stowmarket) and home grown Daniel Shelley, ably coached by Britannia team coach Aad Kwakkelstein and all intending to do better.

Anticipating a leisurely start with an opening bye, a late group change meant a 08:30 appearance – another long day for the parents! Up for the challenge the boys went in eager to win, the competition would be very, very hot tho – 5 teams in the group and all determined to win.

First matches were against IF Sport (Harrow), all unranked but with challenging styles, a few worrying moments but gave the boys their first taste of victory with a clear win (6-0).

Next was Plymouth, watching them earlier gave cause for concern as they gave other teams a run for their money, very dynamic and fast, but again no match for our boys as Dan's serves confused them and James attacking consistency was too strong, it was starting to look good, another 6-0 win.

A hall change as the floor became slippery from the humidity (the boys reckoned it was their sweat ☺) may have upset them slightly as Dorset fielded an extremely good team and we went one game down, but still ahead of the pack, winning 5-1. A working lunch meant no time to recover between matches.

Finally – the top seeded team from Cardiff were to be the ultimate challenge – only one of us would go through and we needed 4/6 to win. Cardiff fielded the 3 top ranked players in Wales, had won all their games and would be no pushover – the boys relished the challenge.

The first 3 games were in the bag, but then lost 2, it would come down to the final game between Kian and Cardiff. By now everyone else had finished, it was 18:30, players were tired, organisers weary and remaining spectators grouped round with good natured encouragement for both sides. Kian battled away in his strong consistent style but Cardiff were equally hot, points edged up equally and Cardiff were looking good 2:1 up in the fourth, score 10:9 to Kian, there was uproar when he pushed it to 11:9 – the final game would decide it. A strong start by Kian quickly pushed his score up to 7:4 when Cardiff called a timeout, unfortunately to no avail as their player then missed his serve and confidence lost with final score 11:4 – Britannia had won! Only 2 of the 6 matches had not gone to five games !

Congratulations to James, Kian and Dan who are rightly proud of their team achievement and gives Britannia national level recognition and a platform for up and coming players. Of course thanks go to Aad who took time out to professionally coach them on the day and to Britannia for sponsoring the entry fee.

