

Kirkwall Squash Club 5 Set Handicap Tournament

(2011)

Thursday 20th to Saturday 22nd January saw Kirkwall Squash Club hold its annual 5 Set Handicap competition. This tournament is designed to give every competitor an equal chance of lifting the trophy and often sees fitness levels tested to breaking point. This year was no exception with a number of games going the distance and the longest lasting over ninety minutes – a lifetime in squash terms.

The junior section, played as best of 3, was full of close games. In the pick of the first round matches Sam Scott came from a game down against the mercurial Greg Kemp to take the decider 15/13. Michael Schinkel, having managed to hold off a strong challenge from Cameron Robinson in the first round was waiting for Sam in the semi-final. Their game was another 3 set tussle, Michael coming from a set down to win 15/12 in the third. In the other half of the draw Alistair Scott squeaked through his semi-final, beating Sweyn Cowie 15/13, 15/14 in a match that could have gone either way. The final saw Alistair's more powerful game take the first set 15/9 but Michael showed his fighting spirit in the second, taking the game to 14/14, before losing the final rally to see a relieved Alistair win in straight sets.

The women's competition also served up some tight and entertaining games. In the first round Melanie Slater twice came from behind to beat Christine West 15/9 in the fifth and Betty Stanger was taken to 5 sets by a determined Glynis Tait before progressing. Betty's semi-final opponent was Liz Flett who fought hard but lost out in 3 close sets. In the other semi-final junior Sarah Cowie took a 2 set lead, but Melanie won the third and it was looking like another 5-set thriller when Melanie took the lead early in the fourth. There was disappointment for Mel and the spectators, however, when she pulled up injured and it was Sarah who moved into to her second consecutive 5-set final. In the final it was Betty who made the stronger start to take a 2 set lead. A determined Sarah

showed what she was capable of in the third but could not sustain that level and it was Betty who went on to retain the trophy 3-1.

The men's competition made for compulsive viewing from the start. In the first round Andy Torbett used all his experience to hold off the exuberant challenge of the fast improving Alex Dohrn in 5 entertaining sets. Andy went on to play Shawn Tait and although he was able to take the first was beaten 3-1 as Shawn progressed to the final. In the other half of the draw Callum Flett had the opportunity to experience first hand the machine-like consistency of Orkney number one Adam Stanger and gave a good account of himself before exiting the competition with head held high. In the game of the first round Terry Flett took a 10 point head start onto the court against Ian Stout and confidently took the first two sets. Ian is not known for giving in without a fight and it was no surprise when he took the third 15/13 to make the match interesting, then the fourth by the same scoreline to force a decider. It was Terry, though, who made the stronger start in the fifth and Ian could not stop Terry from progressing. In the semi-final Terry again started strongly, taking the first two sets but Adam Stanger, having already dispatched one brother and looking to complete the set, roared back to level the match. The fifth set saw Adam do everything he could to reel in his opponent in but Terry again showed his determination to win the fifth and move, exhausted, into the final. The men's final saw Shawn and Terry on the same handicaps, meaning the final was a simple race to 15 in each set. True to form Terry started strongly, winning the first 15/10, but his epic matches in the previous rounds looked to have taken their toll when Shawn moved to 14/12 in the second. Terry, though, was clearly in no mood for another marathon match. He gathered himself, took the second 15/14 and ground out the third 15/11 to lift the 5-set trophy for the first time.

Congratulations to Alistair, Betty and Terry and thanks to everyone who helped out over the weekend. Thanks also to Alec Livingstone for keeping the website updated www.kirkwallsquashclub.co.uk.