

WALES M70 TEAM – HOME INTERNATIONALS NOTTINGHAM 2019

The Tournament was held at Nottingham Squash club 17th / 18th May 2019 and began Friday evening at 5 pm with the first match against perennial and again hot favourites England. First up, making his debut and earning his first International cap was Paul Ogden who faced a very experienced opponent. In spite of determination and effort from Paul and the rest of the Welsh team, unfortunately there was little success to show until Mike Mooney, at No 1 played magnificently before narrowly losing 3-2 to Howard Cherlin, the present British O 70 champion. This was followed by another closely contested game at No 2 where Steve Evans finally lost to Barry Featherstone, who recently finished 5th in the O 70 World Championships in the USA.

The following morning after some rest and recuperation, Wales faced a buoyant Irish side, full of confidence after defeating Scotland the previous day. However, Welsh spirit was raised as Chris Leach powered to a 3-1 hard fought victory at No.5. Veteran International, Leighton Jenkins, returning after a long injury however got embroiled in a lob, drop, boast duel which had to be conceded to an equally experienced and wily Seamus Daly. This was followed again by another inspiring performance from Mike Mooney playing against David Gotto, easily the best player of the tournament and although having to concede defeat Mike was able to take a very important game from David who had to work very hard for his victory. Duncan Jones playing at No 4 immediately fed off the inspiration completely dominating his opponent with characteristic unconventional but accurate shots. This evened up the match score at 2 rubbers each, leaving it to Steve Evans at no.2 to try and bring home the win However after opening up a decisive 2-0 lead Evans's Irish opponent cleverly turned the tables to level at 2-2. The final game was closely fought until victory was snatched from the jaws of defeat and Wales had achieved their well-deserved win.

This made the afternoon's match with Scotland very interesting as a victory for Wales would ensure the Tournament Team Runners-Up medal, very seldom achieved. So 3 wins out of the 5 matches was the target.

Every match was a battle. First going one way then the other. Duncan Jones again managed a solid victory, but with such fine margins of difference, after being within 2 points of a 3-0 victory at No 1 and again a small margin at No. 5, both Welsh players had to accept 3-2 defeats. So a win for Wales in the final match at No 2 only determined that Ireland not Scotland were the Tournament Runners-Up.

The final points for Runners-Up read Ireland 28, Scotland 28 and Wales 27. A close and fine effort by the Welsh O 70 squad.

England, along with Ireland, were presented with their Winners and Runners-Up Trophies at the presentation dinner held in the Britannia Hotel. Thanks and appreciation was expressed to the tournament organisers for what was truly a competitive and enjoyable weekend in an excellent facility.

I would like to put on record also my thanks to the Welsh S.R.A and appreciation for the commitment, effort, support and camaraderie of the team players and from the Ladies O 50 and Men's O 50 teams who were also competing at the same venue. The Welsh O70 squad

Mike Mooney, Steve Evans (Capt.), Leighton Jenkins, Duncan Jones, Chris Leach, Paul Ogden

STEVE EVANS M070 CAPTAIN

