

WALE MEN'S OVER 50

HOME INTERNATIONALS 2 & 3 May 2014

DUBLIN

The Wales Men's Over 50 squad consisted of **Gary Hales, captain (1), Mark Thomas (2), Mark Regan (3), Mark Huxtable (4), Nick Guard (5), and Julian Griffiths (6)**

Wales v England

The opening match on the Friday evening was against England. However, the start of the match was delayed considerably due to a "transport issue". The Squash Club was a 20 minute walk from the hotel and only one 30-seater mini-bus had been hired to transport all the players and spectators (which numbered about 70!) from the hotel to the Fitzwilliam Club. After 3 return journeys by the mini-bus eventually all players and partners were in the right place! Not the best of starts to the evening,



particularly for Julian Griffiths who was making his International debut against David Gray. It was tough going against the England number 5 and Julian put up a good fight but lost 0-3 (3/9 2/9 0/9). Next up at number 3 was Mark Regan against Darren Withey. Mark found things just as tough and also lost 0-3 (1/9 2/9 1/9). Unfortunately, the Wales captain Gary Hales could do no better. Playing at number 1 string Gary was only able to pick up a handful of points in losing to the talented Eamonn Price 0-3 (3/9 0/9 1/9). However, the remaining two Welsh players did a good deal better. Mark Huxtable, at number 4, was playing fantastically well! He won the first game 9/7, against Gary Raw and though he lost the next 2 games he fought back to win the fourth game 9/6. In the fifth game the English player just had the edge but this restored some pride to the Wales performance even though Mark eventually lost 2-3 (9/7 2/9 0/9 9/6 1/9). Mark Thomas was looking good against Martin Greenslade, until midway through the first game, when Mark suddenly felt a slight muscle strain in his leg. That just took the edge off Mark's play and he battled through the restriction not letting it affect his play and only narrowly lost 0-3 (7/9 2/9 4/9) at number 2 string. If he had full mobility it could have been much closer! So a 0-5 (2 - 20) defeat to England and Scotland awaited the team in the morning.

Wales v Scotland

Nick Guard, at number 5, set play under way against Tom Adams and each game was agonisingly close but the Scottish player just had the edge winning 3-0 (9/6 9/6 9/6). At number 3 Mark Regan was up against Robin Ridley. Mark had beaten Robin last year in a marathon 3-2 battle for over an hour that set up a Wales 3-2 victory. However, this year Robin had revenge and won 3-0 (9/5 9/0 9/3). Wales needed a win to stay in the match and at number 1 Gary Hales produced a victory against Chris Holt. The first 2 games were comfortable but in the third Gary had to rally from 4/8 down to take the game 10/9. The final score was 3-0 (9/6 9/6 10/9). Both the number 4's and number 2's went on at the same time, with Wales needing to win both. At number 2 Mark Thomas was up against Ronnie Carter. Even though Mark was still struggling with a muscle strain he played superbly to win 3-0 (9/5 9/4 9/4). Mark Huxtable made a great start at number 4 taking the first game 9/4 against Russell Hunter but he could not maintain the form that he had showed yesterday against England and Mark lost 1-3 (9/4 0/9 2/9 4/9). So the match was lost to Scotland 2-3 (7-12).

Wales v Ireland

In the final match both teams were fighting it out for 3rd place. At number 5 Julian Griffiths was unfortunate to be playing Damien O'Riley, who had played at number 1 or 2 in previous years for Ireland. Damien's experience and variety of shot did not allow Julian to settle into any sort of rhythm and the Irishman won 3-0 (9/4 9/2 9/2). At number 3 Mark Regan played David Borton, the surgeon who throws himself about the court and never gives up! Mark made a bad start losing the first 1/9. The game was full of lets as the players got in each other's way but Mark managed to maintain his concentration better in the next two games taking them 9/6 9/2. Mark should have wrapped it up in the fourth game but David "dug-in" and won it 9/6. The final game was close all the way up to 6-all until Mark held match ball at 8/6, but he could not make it count!. The Irishman once again was diving and throwing himself about the court and recorded another amazing come-back by winning 3-2 (9/1 6/9 2/9 9/6 10/8). Wales once again needed to win the 3 remaining matches. At number 1 Gary Hales duly obliged with a comfortable win against Kevin O'Rourke 3-0 (9/0 9/2 9/1). Both number 2's and number 4's went on at the same time. Mark Thomas at number 2 again played controlled aggressive squash, despite his injury, to win 3-0 against George Hewitt (9/3 9/5 9/4). Nick Guard was left to play the deciding match but was up against Fergal Redmond, who had rested in the morning and was looking very sharp about the court. Nick found himself 2-0 down and 8/0 down. A run of 5 points in the third game drew Nick back to 5/8 but the gap was too much and Nick lost 0-3 (4/9 2/9 5/9). So Wales had been defeated 3-2 (12-8) England defeated Scotland and so they both finished first and second, respectively. Those narrow 3-2 defeats against Scotland and Ireland left Wales in fourth place.

Gary Hales
Wales Men's Over 50's