



HARRY THOMAS MEMORIAL TOURNAMENT 2019

FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED

A record 122 hearing impaired children competed in the Annual Tournaments with some 20 – 30 teachers supporters in attendance. With the mini tennis indoors, the weather wasn't a problem but on 2nd April, with only 2 courts guaranteed indoors, and with rain falling at 9am a few anxious hours followed.

On Tuesday 12th March 2019, 61 Hearing Impaired children from 13 schools in the North East descended on David Lloyd, Stockton to compete in their 27th annual Mini Tennis event. While the mini tennis is the main point of the day, the real success was the way the children socialised and made friends from other schools, had lots of fun, and often showed a new side to their personalities.

Put in to 10 groups, playing round robin matches, it was encouraging to see how the younger children, often completely new to the game, really embraced the situation showing sheer delight on just winning a point. As a result of the Round Robin matches knockout semi-finals followed by 4 finals resulted in the following:

Girls 8 & Under Ruby Honour bt Laila Lauder 5-3 5-4 (Both Darlington)

Boys 8 & Under Gejza Kovac (Sunnyside) bt Zed McTiernan (Whinstone) 5-3 5-2

Girls 11 & Under Farrah Appleby (Sunnyside) bt Florence Cobain (St Margaret's) 5-3 5-4

Boys 11 & Under Declan Venis (Sunnyside) bt Jake Joyce (Sunnyside) 5-3 5-4

All the finalists received individual trophies and medals and the winners received the Annual Shields.

All the children attending received certificates of encouragement for taking part and finally a special award was presented to Edward Devine, who played his round robin matches sat in a chair, assisted by a teacher. Despite his disability his infectious smile and obvious enjoyment of being there and taking part was applauded by all.

My thanks to the Hearing Impaired Service in Middlesbrough/ Stockton and Low Incidence Needs Service in Darlington for contacting local schools and ensuring the children have a chance to attend, also to the LTA for providing a box full of goodies for the event and also to Matt Elkington, Disability Development Partner, for his support.

On the 2nd April, 62 children arrived from Leeds, Castleford, Durham, Middlesbrough and Stockton. In all 13 schools were represented with boys and girls with ages ranging from 10 to 16.

By the time play started the rain had virtually disappeared but it was extremely cold on the outside courts. However, no complaints from the children and 9 round robin groups got underway and despite playing musical chairs with the courts (in, out and in again etc) all group matches finished by lunch time, when packed lunches were consumed and everyone warmed up inside.

Knockout semi-finals followed by 4 finals finished as follows:

Girls 13 & Under: Grace Llewellyn (Northfield) bt Mehe Isaq (Ian Ramsey) 5-3 5-3

Boys 13 & Under Jacob Spence (Yarm) bt Adam Lincoln (St Peters) 5-1 5-0

Girls 16 & Under Chloe Ivison (Outwood,Acklam) bt Tahreema Khatun (Sandhill View) 4-5 5-3 5-2

Boys 16 & Under Macauley Lee McIntyre (St Johns,Boston) bt Tyler Lee McIntyre 5-0 5-1

My thanks also to Sarah Lowes for her invaluable assistance on both days and who hopefully will in the future take a fuller role in the organising of the event, and to all the teachers, parents who gave up the warm indoors to umpire the matches on the freezing cold outdoors



This was taken of some competitors, teachers (and me!) just before leaving after a great day

The real success of the two days was highlighted by two of the girls, from different schools, who were seen sat on the floor talking to each other. Nothing extraordinary about that you might think, except both were known to be shy and not very communicative. By talking they found out that they actually lived a stone's throw apart and didn't know it. They both now have a friendship which will continue.

This sort of friendship was not the only one forged that day which made it all worthwhile for them, the teachers and parents alike.