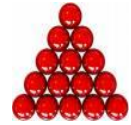




# “Mersey Masters”



## “2010”

### Update 28<sup>th</sup> February

This year’s inaugural event kicked off on the Sunday with two matches for each player in this ‘Champions League’ format, with all 24 entrants eagerly awaiting doing battle with one another.

Word from the club itself was that it had been quite some time since the quality of these players had gathered all at once, and with the tables being recently recovered due to Pro Tournament 5 there the week or so before, it was primed to get off to a flyer, and so it did:-

### Group A

‘Mr Unstoppable’ Andy Housley was opening up against the machine that is Roy Bennett (Lpool Echo recently nicknamed him the ‘Wavertree Wonder!’) – surely a classic on the cards?! So it proved, with Roy opening up a 2-0 lead with breaks of 43 & 44 and hardly missing a ball. Andy though fought his way back with some fine potting of his own with breaks of 90 (2<sup>nd</sup> highest of the day) & 42 and took all three of the final frames to come out with a 3-2 win. Super result for him, and a great comeback!

‘Old Adversaries’ John Whitty and Mark ‘The Glove’ Evans were also up first, and yet although both players had breaks of 61 & 52 respectively, they both struggled somewhat to find their best snooker. John, after leading twice and being pegged back, eventually came through a closely fought match 3-2

The last match to kick the morning off in this group brought Seamus Nixon (recent Champion of Champions Winner) up against Tony Cook (‘Mr Consistent’ from the Garston & Widnes League). Two great ‘one ball’ potters, and in this one it was Tony who got the upper hand taking a 2-1 lead. Both players though struggled slightly to find that extra gear, and yet with the help of a 41, Seamus managed to take the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> frames to take that match 3-2.

The afternoon matches threw up a couple of interesting results. Firstly we had two guys hoping to build on their earlier wins up against one another, Andy Housley v John Whitty, with John coming out the victor in this one by the fine margin of 4-1. This was helped by breaks of 48, and 71 & 66 clearances. That said, Andy walks away from that one disappointed as he knows he can play much better. He’ll be back for whoever’s up next that’s for sure!

Tony Cook then had Roy Bennett to contend with, and this was another finely contested match. Tony started off the brighter of the two and moved both 1-0 and 2-1 ahead, only to miss what he knows was a simple pink, to allow Roy back in to take the 4<sup>th</sup>. Roy then went on to take the last, and the match 3-2 to notch his first win. No breaks though in this one, somewhat surprisingly. Can only conclude that missing out on lunch possibly not a good tonic for these two fellas?!!

Other game in the final session of this group put Mark Evans up against Seamus Nixon, and after a cagey start with the first two frames shared, it was Seamus who appeared to find a second wind and raise his game a notch or two. He took the final three frames for a superb 4-1 win. Mark, knowing him, will be lining up a few practice sessions at Thingwall over the next few weeks I’m sure, so I wouldn’t rule out a recovery from him just yet. Seamus continues his fine form since winning his recent event. Lots more to be said in this group!

### Group B

The ‘group of death’ it was referred to from a few quarters when the draw was made. Not sure quite how to take that, but maybe with the average age on the upper side, we may look to be getting on if that’s what was meant?!

Anyhow, opening up in this one was an absolute classic encounter. Arguably two of the most experienced entrants in this year’s event, John Welsh v Ian Brumby! A closely contested match by all accounts, and yet it was John, after initially going 1-0 down, who played the more consistent of the two. He managed a couple of breaks (42 & 55) in taking all of the remaining 4 frames for a great opening result of 4-1!!

Also up first was Chris Achilles against Ste Whittaker – a finely balanced encounter. So it proved to be too, with both players showing each other they meant business. Chris opened up with a 2-0 lead, only for Steve to come back at him with the next. In a fourth frame which both players had chances in, it was Chris who come out on top, before Steve managed to take the last in a narrow 2-3 defeat. Both players were relatively pleased though with their opening display, with breaks of 49 & 47 from Chris, and Steve with a 50 & 63 of his own. All set up nicely for the next!

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> opening match in this group, it was John Timson up v Lee Evans (The Grinder). Both players here struggling to find any rhythm in their game, and resorted at times to a tactical bout! Nothing giving though from either of these two, and it one stage even managed a bit of humour when exchanging what must have been a dozen safety shots each! John though crept ahead twice in this one, 1-0 and 2-1, before Lee come back again to snatch the fourth. It was typical end to the match, in it coming down to the last black, and with a ten foot cut left on it, Lee missed narrowly to allow John back in for a half ball pot to take the game 3-2. Onwards and upwards though for them both – clearly hadn't had their weatabix!

The afternoon matches began with John Welsh up against Ste Whittaker, and it must have seemed that John had picked up exactly where he finished off his first match, in opening up a 3-0 lead with breaks of 61 & 52. Just when it seemed John was on for a whitewash, out of the blue came Steve's potting to find his game and opened up more with a 43 & 53 of his own to take the last 2 frames for a respectable 2-3 loss. John felt slightly shell-shocked it seemed by Steve's recovery. Good game again though!

Also up was Lee Evans v Ian Brumby, undoubtedly a wounded animal from his first game defeat to John, and so it proved in opening up with a nice 51 to take the first. Next frame will be one to remember for sure – a remarkable total clearance of 139!! The highest break of the day so far, and one that will be extremely hard to beat! All we'll say is that taking the last two reds, from cushion positions, were out of this world. Superb Ian! Lee though wasn't to be outdone, and back he came with decent breaks of his own to take both the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> frames to level up at 2-2! And so to the decider, and after having taken a brave red on, Lee was forced into a difficult pink into the top corner - missed it, and Ian then hit a 73 to leave Lee requiring snookers. 3-2 to Ian in the end and another great game!

John Timson was up in his second match against Chris Achilles, with this one promising to be a classic! Both players vastly experienced, and looking to build on their earlier results. It was John who seemed to find his game in this one and appeared the most comfortable when presented with an opening. He started to find the rhythm a bit more, and played some solid snooker – simple 20's and 30's took him away from Chris, who as the frames passed him by, seemed to be running out of any form of luck. The balls simply weren't being kind to him! And so to an impressive 5-0 win for John, who will be delighted with that win. For Chris, he will know his game (& his luck) will change around!

## Group C

No strangers to one another in this group, this bunch had high breaks written all over them, and never let us down! Opening up first were Stephen Welsby v John Burns (a familiar match if ever there was one!). Know each others' game inside out from St Aloysius, and with the help of a fine run of breaks (45, 43, 65 & 50) it was Steve who dominated this opener, with John just managing to snatch the last. 4-1 in the end therefore to Steve and a massive opening win for him! Also up was John Hughes from Overton (Widnes), just back from his English Billiards last 16 match in Derby, against Brian Robertson 'So Solid' crew member of Scotties. Strangely in this one, with so much quality between the two, it proved to be a struggle for them both, and it was John who just seemed to grasp the key edges of the frames for a superb 5-0 opening victory. Brian, having just qualified for the latter stages of the North West Open last week, knew he had a bigger task on his hands after this one, as seemed to be lacking that 'spark' he clearly had the week before!

The other opening match in this tight group, brought Darren Burns of St Aloysius up against Danny Plumpton from Widnes, and poor Danny must have wondered what hit him! Darren seemed in relentless form, knocking in breaks of 73, 78 & 79 in opening up a 4-0 lead. With Danny clearly rattled, and struggling to find any confidence, he got it together to take the last (& some heart) for a 1-4 defeat. On this form though, Darren to all around him, looked a real pace setter.

The second matches kick started with Stephen Welsby up against John Hughes, both having had superb wins in their respective first matches. Steve it appeared though in the early stages was brimming with confidence, and John still somewhat struggling to find the potting we are accustomed to seeing from him. Frames seemed to pass him by, as Steve gathered in confidence and took some key balls in closing out a magnificent 4-1 victory to top his group early on.

To the next, and up this time was Brian Robertson v Darren Burns. Just as Brian started to find his cueing, a nice 75 put him 2-1 ahead and what seemed to be in command. Back though came Darren to take the 4<sup>th</sup> and draw level at 2-2. The last was set up nicely, and Brian's tactical play came into situ by playing some clever shots, to take the last and the match 3-2. Great win for him to put him on the map again, after his earlier heavy defeat!

Finally in the group, we had Danny Plumpton looking to restore some parity against the experienced John Burns. It was John though in this one who seemed to go up a level from his earlier game in taking frame after frame for what in the end proved to be a comfortable 5-0 win. For John, that will have proved very welcoming indeed. Not the start that Danny wanted though, but he knows in bringing his A game to the end of March event, he's by no means out of it just yet! Very early days and can be quickly turned around!

## Group D

Familiar faces and territory for this group, with 5 of the 6 players, resident players of Scotties! No hidden secrets for this crew then, although there was the vastly experienced and dangerous Ian Doyle (Huyton Cons) waiting in the wings too! Up first was Ian Weaver v Dave Rogers, a repeat of the Garston Championship Final only last year! Both players seemed brimming with energy, and focus, though it was Ian who settled the faster and opened up an early 2-0 lead. Back came Dave though in taking the 3<sup>rd</sup> to pull it back, but just when he seemed to be finding his aim, back came some ghosts in his game, and he quickly fell behind again in Ian playing some fantastic long shots. He took both the 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> frames to wrap up a great early 4-1 win. Dave, being as honest as he is, knew he had to perform much better!

Also up was Mark Axworthy v Ian Doyle, two players who know their games pretty well from their battles in the Prescot League. Mark in this one settled into his game pretty fast and seemed to knock the stuffing out of Ian slightly, as he opened up a fine 4-0 lead. Ian, clearly struggling with his game, did though manage to put together a nice 49 in the last to take something from the game. 4-1 in the end, and Ian definitely questioning his lack of practice in the previous week or so!

In the other game of the morning session, it brought Paul Dykins up against Danny McCann, a mouth watering match if ever there was one! The opening two frames went to Danny in opening up an early 2-0 lead, and it seemed Danny may be in a rush for a cheese sandwich at 'half time'?! Back though came Paul to snatch the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and it seemed a comeback was on the cards. The final two frames could simply have gone either way, though it was Danny who stretched out to take them both and win a fine opening match 4-1. Breaks of 57, 49 & 48 in this one from young Mr McCann!

Afternoon in the group brought Ian Weaver up against Ian Doyle – another fantastic looking encounter! Ian D though by all accounts continued to struggle with his game, and Ian W seemed to pick up on this quickly going into a 2-0 lead. Ian D pulled the 3<sup>rd</sup> back and then Ian W took 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> for a resounding 4-1 win, helped by a nice 46 along the way. Great start for the 'Weave' and yet for Ian, some reflection time to analyse where he went wrong on the opening day – he knew though! Wouldn't fancy being on the receiving end of the forthcoming practice sessions at the Cons over the coming weeks!!

Up also was Danny McCann v Mark Axworthy – clash of the potters this one!! It didn't disappoint either, and both seemed in a rush for the winners' line! After going 1-0 down though, Mark seemed to unsettle Danny with some crisp potting and took the middle 3 frames to go 3-1 ahead. Danny though restored pride, and another point, in taking the last for a narrow 2-3 defeat. Well done again though Mark! A tight group this was most certainly going to be!

Last for group C brought Paul Dykins v Dave Rogers, and apart from the distraction of admiring Ian Brumby's almighty break on the adjourning table, both seemed to be up for this one, particularly with losing their opening games 4-1. It was Paul though that seemed to be in the mood for potting them off the shade, and he was playing some lovely delicate shots to leave Dave very frustrated in knowing how he was going to take command! Frame after frame, Paul's game seemed to get better, and Dave was getting extremely frustrated with his own game. 4-0 it was to Paul, and just at the last when it appeared a whitewash was on the cards, Dave managed to put together some nice potting of his own to take the last (4-1) and restore at least one point to take into the end of March clashes in a few weeks.

## Reminder s/Updates:-

Format for how latter stages works in terms of last 16 onwards is on the tab/link on the various websites. Details will be on display at Scotties for you all to see during the final group matches on the **28<sup>th</sup> March**

- Matches begin at **10.30am** on the 28<sup>th</sup> March – be there for **10.15am** prompt please.
- **Lunch** break at reception around **12.45pm** – chance too to see how groups looking!
- 2<sup>nd</sup> match of day begins for all at approx **1.30pm**
- 3<sup>rd</sup>, & final match of day, begins for all at approx **4.15pm**

**Last 16 / Qtrs** - **11 April**

**12.15pm** start for last 16 (best of 7)

**4.30pm** start for Qtrs (best of 7)

**Semi Finals (Match Room)** - **25 April**

**1.30pm** start (best of 9)

**Final (Match Room)** - **9 May**

**1.15pm** start (best of 9)

**Note:-**  
John Welsh has reached the latter stages of the English Seniors (last 16) and so far the event date clashes with our group matches on the 28<sup>th</sup> March. Unless anything changes within the next week, he will be playing his three remaining matches prior to the 28<sup>th</sup> at Scotties. Arrangements are being discussed as we write this update.

**And Finally:-**

A huge thank you to everyone involved, for your support, participation, and making it enjoyable for one another. Credit to you all for that! Look forward to seeing you again at the end of March for the final group matches – this is where the heat really does get turned up! Hope you enjoy ☺

Lee Evans & Tony Cook  
(Event Organisers)

