

## **KS5 squash report**

Truro's team of intrepid Squash warriors travelled to Taunton on Wednesday 26 February to play Kings College Taunton and Reigate Grammar for a place in the grand finals, 2020. To progress we simply had to win both matches by a margin of three strings or more (out of five) and book our place among the elite top eight in the entire country.

After a relatively short journey (for us) we took on Reigate first with Joe Thomson, Ollie Beaumont and Ben Thorpe all playing simultaneously. Joe started nervously and surprisingly lacked a little bite in the opening game before finding his length and reeling in his opponent comfortably in the end 2-1. Ollie also needed a few rallies to tactically align himself, but soon settled down and produced a strong 2-0 victory with solid hitting and good touch. Ben simply hurtled into top gear and blasted his way through the match with superior speed, agility and accuracy finishing 2-0. This meant our leading players Jack Mahon and Louis Murray could 'tidy up' with classy wins at the top of the order, both taking out highly credible adversaries with excellent squash and professional attitude.

Final Score: Truro 5-Reigate 0

No rest for the wicked, we went immediately into our match with Kings Taunton knowing that three strings or more would book our place in the final. Joe started slightly slow again but then turned the match on its head and never looked in any doubt as to clinching our first win of the tie 2-1. He was followed by Ollie who tore through his rival and served up an appetising 2-0 win and firm invitation for Ben to follow on to seal the deal. Was there any doubt? Not after the first few rallies in my mind, as Ben was in beast mode and 'mauled' his opponent in straight games to guarantee our place with a fine 2-0 victory. Louis and Jack could be forgiven for taking things slightly easier, but such is the measure of the boys, they were still on full throttle themselves and romped home again against seriously good players, in straight games to land Truro a 'clean sweep'.

Final score Truro 5-Kings 0

The KS5 Final will be staged on Friday 20 March. Our boys are only aged 14 and 15 and will be up against 17 and 18 year olds, but given this level of performance and, I believe, there is still a level yet to come, we can clearly go another huge step further. KS5 is the absolute 'blue ribbon' event and it is hard to overestimate the challenge that lies ahead, but if the stars align for us on the day, the sky literally is the limit.

## **KS4 squash report**

On 5 February our extremely strong, but somewhat injury prone, KS4 team travelled to Surrey to take on Epsom College and Lancing School in our bid to qualify for the National finals next March. After a very long journey the evening before, we had a good warm-up at the excellent Winchester Club before commencing battle with Epsom in the afternoon.

With two lovely glass back courts at our disposal, Ben Thorpe and Callum Oliver went on concurrently to start the proceedings and both went 1-0 down in the best of three format in their matches. Ben hit a decent young player who was that bit tighter and more controlled, executing his game plan very well in order to reel in our slightly shell-shocked boy 2-0. Meanwhile Callum managed to overcome his inner doubts and reverse the pressure on his opponent with better target-hitting and his superior forehand strength, taking a 2-1 win.

Tied at 1-1, Joe Thomson and Louis Murray entered the fray and suddenly all concerns were put to bed with two focused and professional performances to gain straight sets victories and clinch the overall result. Louis took out a highly nationally ranked player and Joe improved markedly in his game to run out comfortably. Jack Mahon (still injured and only at half pace) then sealed the deal with a very tricky match against a younger England player, winning 2-1 and securing an overall Truro victory by the margin of 4-1.

We then went straight into our match with Lancing, who were completely fresh, with Ben and Ollie Beaumont stepping up to the mark and completely dismissing their opponents in straight games with minimum fuss and ruthless efficiency. At 2-0 up, the match of the day was fought between England no.6 Louis Murray, and England no.1 Jonah Bryant. The quality of this encounter cannot be understated, with huge rallies, ridiculous agility and awesome racket work. The best junior match in this competition I have ever seen. In the end Jonah proved just that level too strong and prevailed leaving the school scores at Truro 2, Lancing 1, with Joe on the other court attempting to seal victory. This he achieved with no real concerns and a cast iron will-to-win, leaving Jack to tidy up the fixture in fine style and return an overall Truro victory 4-1.

Next, the National Finals on 19 March. We need to focus and work to the next level in training now, in order to have any chance of toppling a very strong Wycliffe team who are training twice-daily in order to fend off our challenge. Only with consistent, detailed endeavour and a lot more luck in injury avoidance, is the dream still achievable, just...

### **KS3 squash report**

On Wednesday 29 January our youngest and least experienced team travelled up the M5 to Somerset in order to compete with Millfield, Perins, and Lancing, for a place in the prestigious squash grand finals next March in Nottingham.

We were very much the underdogs for this fixture, given the pedigree of the other teams involved and the fact that we had endured tight qualifying margins just to get this far. However, the team is improving with every match and gaining steadily in court-craft and pressure scenarios, so an outside chance of progressing was clearly in our mind set.

We faced Perins School first and started very well with strong wins for Josh Leigh, Loki Newton and Sam Poppy. At the top of the order Ed Hayes and Callum Oliver both had chances to convert in their matches but just lost out. The final result was therefore a solid 3-2 victory for Truro.

Our second match was against a very strong Millfield who beat us 5-0 in very convincing style. They have a couple of nationally ranked players in their team and will almost certainly contend for a medal finish in Nottingham.

Finally, we needed a top-drawer performance against Lancing to stand any chance of progressing and this is exactly what we achieved with Will, Josh, Sam, Ed and Callum all winning in straight sets securing a fabulous 5-0 victory!

The final standings were thus Millfield 45, Truro 26, Lancing 11 and Perins 8. This means that Millfield qualify as group winners and we have to wait for all the results around the country to be

tabulated and see if we are one of the best two group runners-up which equates to a one in three chance!

**Reports by Miss Viv Cobner**