

## Record Entries At This Years Leinster U15 & U19 Yonex Open Championship 2020

### Introduction

There were 201 entries across the three badminton disciplines for both the U15 & U19 events, where players battled for medals and podium positions over two long days at Leinster's Baldoyle Badminton Centre, Dublin.

In military style fashion, Amanda Dunlop ran a no-nonsense badminton operation for the players kicking off sharp at 9am on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> of January.

There was plenty of background staff on hand, including family duo Jean & Brian Kelly and Grainne Kinnerk. Whilst the hall was warming up quickly, the Black Army Umpires climbed to their chairs to take charge of the highly talented group of juveniles who were to grace the courts for the next 48 hours!

### ***'U15 – Dylan Noble Does The Treble & Siofra Flynn & Paige Woods The Double'***

#### **Boys U15 Singles**

The standard of play was excellent, with many matches going to three sets. The top half of the draw was a tough affair and saw Praneel Reddy Vallapureddy & Christopher Chee meet Dylan Noble & Joshua Tang in the Quarter Finals. All extremely talented players, and ones to watch! Dylan continued in top form to win through to semi-finals without dropping a set throughout the entire singles event. And a tightly fought match saw Ulster players, Christopher & Joshua battle it out, with Christopher coming out on top 21-17 22-20.

The bottom half of the draw saw Leinster's Fionn Dowling & Eoghan Cooney emerge to the last eight, alongside Galway's Karl McLoughlin and Ulster's Rory Comber from Ballyclare. Karl beat Fionn in two competitive sets 21-18 21-12, whilst Comer beat Cooney in two solid straight sets 21-8 21-10.

The match of the semi-finals was Comer vs McLoughlin, with Comer holding off match point in the second set to win 15-21 22-20 21-14. Meanwhile Dylan cruised into the final beating Chee 21-7 21-6, but a very good singles tournament for Christopher as he has years on his side, and is one to watch for the future.

The final was a competitive match but Dylan proved too strong for Rory securing his first of three gold medals beating him 21-9 21-10.

#### **Girls U15 Singles**

Jasmine Buchanan, Chloe McGrane, Michelle Shochan and Paige Woods were all victims of Leinster's in-form Siofra Flynn.

Ulster player, Jasmine Buchanan, beat Munster's Molly Keneally 23-21 21-16 but then met Flynn who won 21-5 2-4 in the early round. Meanwhile Leinster's, Michelle Shochan beat



Roisin McKenna (Ulster), 21-14 21-16 and continued her winning ways, beating Laura Heery (Leinster) 21-9 21-10 to secure a semi final place against Flynn.

The bottom half of the Girls U15 Singles event saw Nicole Joy (Leinster) and Paige Woods (Ulster) come through to face off each other in the semi-finals. Woods won the three set battle 16-21 21-9 21-16 against the current U13 Number 1.

Siofra continued to dominate and beat an extremely talented Michelle Shochan, 21-7 21-9 to then challenge Woods for podium position. Despite being unwell, Siofra won in straight sets 21-11 21-11 but a good performance from Ulster's Paige Woods.

### **Boys & Girls U15 Doubles**

The 30 strong doubles entries across both disciplines saw five of the eight seeded partnerships make it to the semi-finals.

In the first of the boys semi-finals, the young bucks from Leinster, Fionn Dowling and Senan O'Rourke had a slow start going down 2-11 in the 1<sup>st</sup>, and then went on to beat 3/4 seeds Comer and McLoughlin in a high-quality doubles display 15-21 21-16 21-12, which makes the Nationals Boys Doubles in a few weeks one to watch!

Meantime on the bottom half of the draw Noble & Cooney secured their final place beating Aman Kothiyal & Darragh Murtagh to 21-16 21-14.

The Boys final was a two set affair with the longer term partnership of Cooney and Noble proving its investment, winning 21-14 21-18. That said, Dowling and O'Rourke are on the up and were not just there to make up the numbers. A partnership to watch out for the future!

The number one seeds in the Girls Doubles lived up to the seedings with Flynn and Woods comfortably securing their place. The other semi-final did not go to its seeding, with Michelle Shochan and Chloe McGrane knocking out second seeds Collins and McKenna 21-18 21-9.

The final of the Girls U15 Doubles went to the number 1 seeds Siofra Flynn and Paige Woods in two straight sets 21-11 21-14.

### **Mixed Doubles U15**

Well it was THREE in a row for one player and TWO in a row for TWO players with Dylan Noble and Paige Woods facing off against Siofra Flynn and Eoghan Cooney.

Darragh Murtagh and Nicole Joy, yet another new emerging name in the game of badminton, secured their place in the semi-finals by a thrilling three setter against Kothiyal and Shochan 21-19 20-22 21-18. They were beaten in two sets by Flynn and Cooney.

Pranav Erukattil and Orlaith Evans had stunning performances to earn their place in the semi-final. They knocked out Comer and McKenna in a three-set thriller 10-21 22-20 22-22 and then beat McLoughlin and Fahy 21-12 21-15. They had given it all to get to the semi-finals and their incredible journey came to an end to Woods and Noble 21-11 21-13.



The final was a three set thriller and deserved the three set status with Dylan Noble and Paige Woods taking the win 21-19 11-21 21-17, and giving Dylan his third gold medal of the weekend! Credit also to Siofra Flynn and Paige Flynn who took two gold medals, not too shabby and exciting times with perhaps a rematch in the Nationals, but others will have something to say about that eventuality!

### ***'U19 – Orla Flynn & Matthew Cheung do the Double'***

#### **U19 Boys Singles**

There were 22 entries in the Boys Singles, and only two of the seeds made their way to the semi-finals namely Ulster's Jack Armstrong and Leinster's Sean Patrick Laureta. The top half of the draw saw Sean Patrick & Vincent Pontanosa meet in the semi-final with some exceptional badminton along the way from both players. Sean & Vincent had a tight two setter contest, with Sean winning out at 21-17 21-16. The bottom half saw unseeded Matthew Cheung beat Jack Armstrong in the second semi-final.

Matthew's devastating form continued into the final, where the crowd had the pleasure of witnessing a stunning contest between Matthew & Sean. Matthew was victorious, taking the honours with a score of 22-20 21-15. The U19 Nationals will be an intriguing affair with the U17's snapping at the heels of their older counterparts.

#### **U19 Girls Singles**

There were 19 entries to the Girls Singles. In the top half of the draw, Sophia Noble and Orla Flynn met in the semi-final. Once again, the two players keenly contested to see who would emerge victorious to take her place in the final. Today was to be Sophia's day who won out on a scoreline of 21-18 21-15. The bottom half of the draw saw Lucy Fox and Anastasiya Bogoslovskaya win through the for a place in the semi-finals. Lucy won out on the day 21-10 21-13.

The final saw Lucy and Sophia compete for Gold, and Sophia remained true to her outstanding form this season to win 21-8 21-10. Sophia has been on a winning streak since competing in the Quarter Final in Poland at the U17 European Championship in September and has proven herself to be a real contender, not only at U17, but at all ages.

#### **U19 Boys & Girls Doubles**

12 Boys and 11 Girls doubles partnerships fought hard for these two titles! Conor Byrne and Daniel O'Meara secured a win in the quarter-finals against Sean Patrick Laureta and Jack Armstrong 17-21 21-11 21-16, to then beat Ben Lawlor and Scott Guildea 21-19 21-11.

Meanwhile Matthew Cheung and Vincent Pontanosa faced David & Kevin Downey in a highly competitive game, played in great spirit to win 21-17 22-20.

The final saw the underdogs Matthew Cheung and Vincent Pontanosa beating O'Meara and Byrne in two straight sets 21-16 21-11. Once again, the U17s are asking tough questions.



The girls doubles event saw some very high-quality doubles play, with plenty of three-setters to keep the crowd entertained. The first semi-final was one of those three-setters and saw Anastasia Bogoslovskaya and Alexandra Troy beat Kerry Fallon and Megan McLoughlin in a highly entertaining match 18-21 21-18 21-11. The second semi-final saw Orla & Neasa Flynn compete with Laura Comer & Fiona McAdams and take the win 21-19 21-15.

Once again, the final saw another entertaining three-setter with high-quality badminton shown by Orla & Neasa against Anastasia & Alexandra. It was definitely a crowd pleaser and ended with Orla & Neasa taking the win 21-18 18-21 21-14.

### **U19 Mixed Doubles**

Three of the four seeds came through to the semi-finals of the mixed. The first semi-final saw Number 1 seeds Sean Patrick Laureta and Orla Flynn beat Peter McDonald & Kerry Fallon 21-9 21-11. Matthew Cheung and Sophia Noble made it to the second semi-final with some impressive wins along the way, to meet the long-established partnership of Daniel O'Meara and Alexandra Troy. Daniel & Alexandra showed their experience with a 21-4 21-16 win over the younger pairing of Sophia & Matthew.

The final was an exciting three setter, and a fitting last match of the day after trojan logistics by the organisers, with Amanda keeping her eye on proceedings. Daniel & Alexandra beat Sean & Orla 21-15 12-21 21-12 to secure the Leinster U19 Yonex Open Championship 2020.

The U15/U19 Leinster Yonex Open Championship presentations were made by President Catherine Smyth with Leinster Chairman, David Murphy also in attendance. The weekend saw 109 players compete in a total of 182 matches. All of this was made possible by our Referee Patricia Blake & our Umpires who were present for the full two-day competition and ensured that all matches were played in good spirit, and on time.

Great badminton by the juveniles with the gap now closed between the 14/15 years olds and the 17/18 year olds. The future looks great for Irish badminton. Well done to all who took-part and well done to Leinster and all involved who made this a memorable event for all.

Written: John Noble 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2020

