

ESSEX OPEN

The Weston Homes Community Stadium the home of Colchester United Football Club hosted the Essex Youth and Essex Open on Sunday. Seventy two players entered the Essex Youth Open which started at 10.30 in the morning, included amongst the entrants were two England Youth Internationals and array of County Youth players as well as some keen young dart players just looking for an enjoyable day out. The standard of play amongst the young players was kept at an extremely high level with several 180's and ten plus checkouts recorded throughout the day.

The semi final matches were played on the main stage and the players who had made it this far epitomised the competition. Two of the players, 17 year olds Ryan Smith and Tony Field had never reached the stage portion of any competition previously whilst their opponents Rhys Hayden (16) and Joe Davis (13) despite being younger were both regular performers at this stage of youth competitions.

The first semi final saw Hayden lose the first leg, against Field, despite hitting a maximum. However his experience at this level was enough to see him through 3-1. The second semi final saw Davis dominate throughout and he completed his 3-0 victory with a composed 19 dart leg.

In the final both players scored heavily and finished clinically. Hayden took the first leg in 18 darts with a 167 checkout and then followed with second in 19 darts. Davis then replied with two 18 dart legs. The final leg saw both players score heavily, Hayden hitting a 140 and two scores of 80 plus to back it up whilst Davis hit three consecutive tens. With both players missing their first attempt at a double it was the 13 year old from Brighton Davis who held his nerve to take the title.

The Essex Open saw over 320 competing players take to the oche who came from all over the south of England. By the time the players had reached the last 32 all of the competitors had won at least three matches. Included in the final 32 were two previous winners, two England Internationals a former England International and the only lady left in the competition Braintree's Amanda Dodd.

At this stage Dodd went out to a player who was on the World Championship stage in January Steve Douglas. The quarter finals were all played alongside each other giving the large crowd left in the venue some excellent entertainment. The semi finals were again played on the main stage with Norfolk's Anton Liscsey and Hertfordshire's County player John Blair competing in the first and Suffolk's British Open runner up Andrew Gilding and the aforementioned Steve Douglas contested the second. The first semi final went to a deciding leg where both players missed vital doubles but in the end Blair was the one to hold his nerve. The second semi final was a high quality affair, 16 tens two maximums and a 118 checkout kept the crowd on the edge of their seats. In the end it was Douglas who won booked his place in the final winning 4-2.

The final ebbed one way and then the other, with 32 scores of 100 or more again the crowd were kept entertained. After eight hours of darts involving over 320 players the tournament ended up being decided on one leg of darts. It was Douglas who won the bull to decide who threw first and this was to prove crucial. The England International currently ranked number 13 in the world held his nerve to pick up the winners trophy and a cheque for £1000.