

Universities Pool Council

PRESS RELEASE

Queens University, Belfast Triumph in BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Championship

Vauxhall Holiday Park, Great Yarmouth was treated to an extravaganza of pool as Queens University, Belfast regained the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Team Championship with a dominant performance against University of Durham in the Team Championship final. The UPC Individual Championship, the biggest ever university pool individual event with 385 entrants, was fiercely contested with Lee Morris (University of the West of England) emerging victorious.

The format of the BUCS-UPC Eight-Ball Championships lies in accordance with all BUCS sporting events. In the Team Championship/Trophy there were eight groups of five teams with the two best-placed first teams going forward to compete in the Last 16 of the Championship. The best-placed team not qualifying for the Championship goes forward to challenge for the Team Trophy whilst the bottom placed team facing relegation to the BUCS-UPC Eight-Ball Shield in 2009-2010. There was all to play for!

Another first for the event was that the UPC welcomed new partner [CueSportTV](#) who were in attendance at the weekend recording a selection of matches to stream to a global audience on their website.

With the groups being seeded based on previous performances, there were few upsets as most of those fancying their chances of contending for the title qualified. The biggest shock was Cardiff 1st only narrowly avoiding relegation and Strathclyde 1st failing to make the knock-out stages for the first time.

In the Last 16 most teams who progressed recorded comfortable wins including holders University of Ulster (Coleraine), represented by a unified University of Ulster team this term, and aimed to write a new chapter in the history books by winning this event for an unprecedented third year running. Three teams squeaked through with shoot-out wins – Glasgow, Essex and Queen's Belfast over Kent, Plymouth and St Andrews respectively to set up a mouth-watering quarter-final line-up.

In the last eight, varsity match rivalry was played out on the national stage with Oxford 1st narrowly defeating Cambridge 1st 6-4 on the "TV tables" to reach the semi-finals and Ulster 1st extinguished the Scottish challenge with a 6-3 win over Glasgow 1st. Queens 1st proved far too strong for Essex 1st and Durham 1st ended Warwick's hopes of completing the "eight-ball and nine-ball" double in a tight shoot-out.

In two keenly contested semi-finals which both went to the three frame tie-breaker with the scores tied at 5-5, Queens 1st got the better of Oxford 1st as Durham 1st became the first team to beat Ulster 1st in this event since February 2006.

In a tense final, Queens 1st and Durham 1st traded frames to leave the match nicely poised at 2-2. Queens, who have been a sleeping giant since they won the inaugural UPC Eight-ball Championship in 2003-2004, were in no mood to let this opportunity slip away. An emphatic second session proved too much for Durham to handle and fittingly the opportunity fell to Paul McKay, part of the victorious team all those years ago, to sink the black and win the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Championship for Queens University, Belfast.

In the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Team Trophy, University of York 3rd fully justified their final berth with notable victories against Queens 1st and their own university first team within their campaign! University of Ulster 2nd demonstrated the strength in depth at their university by making light work of everyone who stood in their way to reach their first Trophy final. When York 3rd arrived at 'the hill' with the score at 5-3 it looked as though their dream run would end in victory but Ulster 2nd had not read the script. They battled back to 5-5 and forced a shoot-out. With momentum in their favour, Ulster 2nd quickly wrapped up the next two frames to win the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Team Trophy.

The BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Shield provides a platform for new teams to compete alongside current teams that are not of Championship/Trophy status. When London School of Economics 1st reached the final by knocking out pre-tournament favourites Portsmouth 1st in the semi-final, they visibly grew in the belief that they were capable of winning the Shield. Leeds 1st captained by seasoned university player Martin Pratt, were always expected to do well so it came as no surprise when they opposed LSE 1st in the final. In a highly competitive final, a three frame shoot-out was again required to decide the winner, and it was left to Glen Spalling (formerly part of the University of Ulster (Coleraine) Championship winning side) to dispatch the winning black for Leeds.

In the BUCS-UPC Individual Championship, Rich Wharton arrived at Great Yarmouth determined to retain his title. When he entered the draw as a seed in the Last 128, he faced Cambridge University captain Rob Hogan who posted a solid all-round performance to take the prize scalp and send Wharton crashing. With Wharton out, the floodgates were open with many players keen to step up to the plate to become the new name etched on the trophy.

With nearly 400 names in the hat at the start of play on Thursday, still being involved at the latter stages on Saturday evening represented a fantastic achievement. In the semi-finals, Lee "Cruncher" Morris (West of England) got the better of Rob Cork (Cambridge) in a high quality affair as Marc Higgins (Ulster) had the edge over Rob Patching (Durham).

In the final, Lee Morris took control in the early exchanges as Marc Higgins struggled to gain a stronghold. Welsh International Blackball player Morris proved merciless though and soared to a 5-1 lead with the frame required to take the title appearing a formality. An unexpected stutter in breaching the finish line allowed Higgins a chance to make his mark in the final and two clinical finishes later, he was back in the hunt at 5-3. Morris wasn't going to be disappointed though and when Higgins sportingly threw in his cue-towel when he was down on the black for victory, a Welshman lifted the UPC Individual title for the first time.

An ecstatic Lee Morris stated that "this was the biggest tournament he has ever won" and was proud to come through such a large field. He said after the match, "I really wanted to do well this weekend and by travelling on my own without a University team, I felt additional pressure to perform. The crowd were fantastic tonight though as even though the majority were supporting Marc, they still showed me the utmost respect. Marc put me under pressure with two great finishes to take it to 5-3 and that was the most pressure I felt throughout the event but I'm relieved to take the title."

Attention now switches to the UPC Women's Eight-Ball Championship that will be contested on the weekend of 20-21 March 2009 and the Student Home Internationals Trials on 28-29 March 2009.

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Notes to editors:

The Universities Pool Council (UPC) is the governing body for pool at higher education level in the United Kingdom. It is recognised by the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS), Scottish University Sport (SUS) and the English Pool Association (EPA).

The UPC organises national nine-ball, eight-ball and women's eight-ball championships for teams and individuals. The UPC also organises the Student Home Internationals representative event.