

Universities Pool Council

PRESS RELEASE

TITLE: England retain Student Home Internationals in Dublin

The Tara Towers Hotel in Dublin hosted the culmination of the 2008-2009 university pool season as England Students retained the Student Eight-ball Pool Home Internationals with a tense win over an Irish side competing on home-soil.

This tournament is played using a group format with each country playing their counterparts once. The top two teams from the final table compete for the Student Home Internationals title with the leading British team being crowned the BUCS-UPC Home Nations Champions.

England began their defence against Ireland, a team who strongly fancied taking their title with players such as Stephen Dempsey (2007 EEPF Mens European Champion) and David Columb (current HESPC Irish Pool Intervarsities Individual Champion) representing them. Jon Shapland as England team manager was back again to blend the experience of Lee Morris (current BUCS-UPC Individual Champion) Rich Wharton (BUCS-UPC Individual Champion 2007-2008) and James Murphy (defending Student International Masters Champion) with the new faces such as Adam Brown (Oxford), Matt Champ (Portsmouth) and Ryan Birt (Warwick) who earned their place within his ranks at the recently held trials. With many tipping these two teams to reach the final, this opening match went the distance with Rich Wharton stepping up to the plate in the decider to draw first blood for England.

Scotland, under the stewardship of Gary Ferguson (former Scotland student representative) for the first time, were intent on making an impression in this tournament and were represented by a mix of the strong Scottish pool playing universities of Strathclyde, St Andrews and Robert Gordon. Their opening opponents were Wales, the perennial underdogs in this tournament, but in previous years have demonstrated that they are not afraid to upset this so-called form book. Team Manager Huw Stapleton, regarded by many to be the backbone that harnesses the Welsh team spirit, led a Welsh contingent who were predominantly Cardiff based. For both teams, this was a key opening match with the victor provided with a foothold to stake a claim for a final berth. In a further example of how fiercely this tournament is contested, a deciding frame was again required with the scores at 10-10 and it was Scotland who emerged with a key win.

Day two started with the second set of group matches fulfilling expectations with Ireland and England recording comprehensive victories over Scotland and Wales respectively. Each team still had a chance of qualification but England with two wins were firmly in the driving seat.

Scotland were hoping for a repeat of last year's epic group victory over the 'auld enemy' to give themselves a chance of qualification but England were in no mood to roll over. England gained the early initiative and when they closed the match with an 11-5 victory, Scotland's only hope of qualification rested with an unlikely Welsh

victory over Ireland. Ireland, knowing that a win would guarantee qualification, proved relentless with the dream (for Wales and Scotland!) of a huge Welsh turnaround ending with a crushing 11-2 defeat.

With the narrowest margin separating England and Ireland in their group game, the final was poised to be a keenly contested affair. With the scores locked at 4-4 after the opening eight frames, it would be a brave man to bet that this match wasn't going to go to the wire as well! At a pivotal time in the second leg, Ireland stamped their authority and surged into a 9-6 lead. With the knowledge that they were only two frames from defeat, Ryan Birt hauled England back into the contest with a critical victory and this proved to be the turning point for the match. Wins for Morris, Champ and Rob Cork quickly followed and when Rich Wharton extracted two visits from his opponent, he duly wrapped up an 11-9 victory by sinking the winning black for the second year running for England to retain their BUCS-UPC Home Nations title.

Jon Shapland captured what this victory meant to his England side when he said, "based solely upon the strength of the opposition we had to overcome to win it again this time, it was without a doubt our best victory yet. I am very, very proud of our achievement."

Stephen Dempsey and Lee Morris were jointly crowned as MVP with 7 wins out of 8 for Ireland and England respectively.

Players from England Students dominated the Student International Masters providing four of the quarter-finalists. The first semi-final saw Jay Murphy (with high hopes of retaining his title) getting the better of David Columb. In the other, Adam Brown set up an all-England final with a virtuoso performance against Stuart Thompson (Wales).

In a high quality encounter which proved to be a fitting end to the Student International Masters, Adam Brown emerged triumphant by a 4-2 scoreline over Murphy with an almost flawless display of dishing to secure an English clean sweep over the weekend.

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For further information and full results/pictures of this event and all other UPC events:

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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.