

Curragh Squash Club hosts Euro Pro squash tournaments

Neal Murphy
sports@leader.ie

Much to the delight of Kildare squash players, the very best of European squash talent arrived in The Curragh club last weekend.

The last minute upgrade to European tour status meant world ranking points were on offer. All of a sudden the best of the best from Ireland arrived with an influx of British world ranked players to add a serious edge to the weekend.

What evolved was the highest standard of squash ever played in the club and a very worthy two day battle for the Anthony Frail Cup.

Ireland and top women were led by Breanne Flynn, currently Ireland's number 1 with a World Ranking of 144. A serious challenge for the Women's title would come from up and coming English tour player Jasmin Kalar. Based in London Jasmin just broke into the World's top 100 ranked players and came to Kildare looking to spoil Irish hopes.

Jasmin is an exceptional athlete with fantastic speed around the court and a very attacking game. Her arrival really added an international dimension to the women's event.

Also on show were a host of Irish international players including Clara Moloney from Carlow, and Hannah McGuigan from Belfast. Irish junior international Sophie Thomas and Sarah Jane Smith also arrived in Kildare looking to win their first world ranking points.

England's Will Salters entry from England created real anticipation in the Men's PSA event. The Birmingham based player broke into the top 200 in the world and was looking to take on all comers for the men's top prize. Will fancied a quick tour of the Curragh, a smash and grab on the PSA cash prize and away with the world ranking points. Waiting for him was an incredibly strong Irish men's entry with the Top 5 Irish ranked players all ready for action.

Sam Buckley, current

Irish Champion and world ranked 156 was joined by long time team-mate, Conor Moran world Ranked 237, Oisín Logan, Alex Smith and David Ryan. All the men's top seeds came to win and got stuck into each other from the first point.

Junior International Jack O'Flynn, fresh from the Junior World Championship in France, was trying to break through into the senior rankings. His matches with Gavin Lestrange and Conor Moran over the weekend showed his ability to compete at the highest level.

The level of squash for the 2 days was extraordinary. By far the best standard of squash seen ever in The Curragh Squash Club.

BIG UPSET The first real dog fight came with Number 4 seed and local favourite, Oisín Logan against the English challenger Will Salters in the quarter-finals.

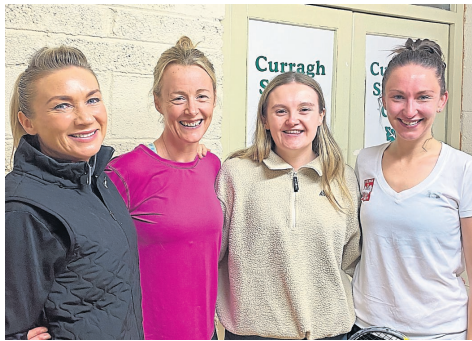
In a 90 minute epic Oisín Logan to the delight of the home crowd ran Will Salters into the ground creating a big upset and showing the quality of Irish squash talent on show. The early exit for the England touring pro had him seriously upset.

On the other side of the draw David Ryan and Alex Smith played out an ultra aggressive quarter final match highlighting the commitment levels from these players. Alex Smith escaped with the win, leaving a seriously unhappy David Ryan behind.

With Irish team places to be picked later in the year all these matches were played on the physical edge and often boiled over into all out confrontation. This only added to the drama with packed viewing galleries to see the effort.

The top 2 seeds Sam Buckley and Conor Moran progressed through early round matches eting up an all Irish line up for the semi-finals.

LADIES PSA Meanwhile Jasmin Kalar in the ladies PSA was making



Niamh Darcy, Rachel Buckley, Roisin O'Shea, Clara Moloney

short work of the Irish home favourite and Irish challenger on her side of the women's draw. Top international juniors Sarah Jane Smith, Sophie Thomas and Rachel Buckley from Galway all found the London player too hot to handle.

Although Kalar was run close in 2 games by Hannah McGuigan in the semi-final the English lady was showing serious intent. Very quick and accurate around the court the Londoner was showing her World ranking was a true reflection of her ability.

Breanne Flynn, the highest ranked player in the event, was also making short work of her opponents. Niamh Darcy from Dublin, Roisin O'Shea, Gabby and Maria O'Brien, Waterford all found Breanne too strong. Smith played out an ultra aggressive quarter final match highlighting the commitment levels from these players. Alex Smith escaped with the win, leaving a seriously unhappy David Ryan behind.

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Sam Buckley and Alex Smith mens Semi Final

ANTHONY FRAIL CUP With all other matches played only the PSA Finals were left to play for the Anthony Frail Cup. Breanne Flynn was first on court against Jasmin Kalar.

The Irish champ went out very handily to overpower and dominate her smaller faster opponent. Breanne's hard hitting drives started creating the opening spaces for her volley attack game. The Londoner Kalar, although highly World ranked, looked nervous and found the power game of Flynn impossible to deal

with. Although Kalar tried her hard running game to tire out the Irish champion she never really came close to upsetting Breanne. With a suitable punch of the air in delight the local crowd were delighted to see a superb exhibition of control and experience from the Sligo woman. A great win for Breanne and her PSA points will push her closer to breaking into the elite World's top 100 women players.

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Neil Brannigan and Phil Coleman mens semi-final local event

Buckley and Conor Moran lined up the two long time club mates, Irish team mates and currently the top two players in Ireland.

Neither player is capable of a backward step and both started out with a hugely physical gameplan, each trying to wear down the other in the hope of creating easier points towards the end of the match.

As each player pushed harder the other responded. A 90 minute exhibition of physically punishing and aggressive play combined with perfect technical execution of drop shots and recovery lob shots left the packed gallery in awe.

It was the highest quality game ever played on the Curragh show court. Each player finding ways of getting advantage only to be met with equally tough recovery play from the opponent.

As the match progressed the watching audience no longer discussed the outcome as all were mesmerised by two players at the very top levels of

fitness and skill playing out an astonishing match.

After 90 minutes it was Sam Buckley who came out with the win, but to everyone else in the audience it was just a pleasure to see squash played at this level.

Thank you to all who came to support and play squash in The Curragh Squash Club. After over a and half years of closure due to Covid restrictions The Curragh Squash club and gym are delighted to be back open and looking for new players and members.

● For only €250 per year for full squash and full gym membership the club can supply racquets and equipment to help people get started and get fit.

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Mens Final Sam Buckley and Conor Moran



Ladies Final Breanne Flynn and Jasmin Kalar



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Michael Crehan and David Ryan Irish international players



Junior Internationals Sophie Thomas and Sarah Jane Smith



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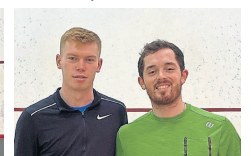
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Clara Moloney and Breanne Flynn Ladies semi final



Ladies Final Breanne Flynn and Jasmin Kalar



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