



WALES MEN'S OVER 55 SQUASH TEAM

HOME INTERNATIONALS 3 & 4 May 2019

GALWAY

The Wales Men's Over 55 squad consisted of **Gary Hales captain (1), Simon Bourge (2), Nick Guard (3), Mark Huxtable (4), Mike Logan (5) & Alan Coppack (6)**

Wales v Ireland

Usually the order of play sees Wales play Scotland on the Friday evening, however the opening match was against Ireland. Alan Coppack was playing his first match for Wales, at number 5 against Timmy McCarthy and took a couple of games to "find his feet" as the first two games were lost 5/11 and 8/11. However, Alan grew stronger as the match progressed and became the more dominant player, winning the next two games 11/7, 11/6 and taking an 8/6 lead in the final game. The momentum was with Alan but then a few "close decisions" just went against Alan and the momentum changed and the game lost 8/11. However, a great debut by Alan narrowly losing 2-3. At number 3, Nick Guard was against Shaun McKee. In a tough first game Nick narrowly lost 9/11 but he responded well to take the next game emphatically 11/4. Two tight games then followed but Nick was the stronger taking them both 11/8 and so winning the match 3-1. Next to play were the number 1 strings, Gary Hales and Vincent Bradley. The two had played each other last year at number 2 string, with Vincent winning 3-1 on that occasion. The first game was close until at 7-all Vincent pulled away to take the game 11/7. Gary made the better start in the second game and looked certain to take it as he led 9/3 but Vincent won 7 of the next 8 points to only trail 9/10. However, Gary managed to win the next point stretching full length to the front of the court and flick a cross-court drop winner to take the game 11/9. The third game followed the same pattern as the second, Gary led 10/4 when Vincent mounted another valiant recovery saving 6 game balls to level at 10-all. Fortunately, Gary managed to hold his nerve and won the next two points and so win the game 12/10. In the fourth game Gary again made the better start but this time Vincent was unable to catch up and Gary won it 11/6 and the match 3-1. So, Wales were now 2-1 up in the contest. Mike Logan, playing at number 4 won a tough first game against Dave Borton 11/9. Both players were hitting the ball hard and virtually "throwing themselves" around the court retrieving every shot possible. A few errors crept into Mike's game in the second and that was the difference as he lost it 4/11. Mike went back to basics, consistently getting the ball deeper than his opponent, which made the difference as he won the third game 11/6. Again, Mike had the edge in the fourth game with his depth and power,

but it could have gone either way. However, Mike won it 11/9 and so the match 3-1. Last to play at number 2 was Simon Bourge against John Dineen (who had played at number 1 string last year), so a stern test for Simon was expected. Simon started well in the first game, powering numerous hard low drives for winners but John was making Simon work hard for every point. Simon took that opening game 11/9 but lost the second 7/11. Simon did not tire and maintained the high intensity in the third game taking it 11/8. John came back in the fourth, winning it 11/7 and so we went to a fifth game. Simon had not played many matches in the last few months, due to a knee injury and so his match fitness was now being questioned but in the fifth game he gave everything, driving the ball hard and low away from John and running down every ball. The effort paid off as Simon won the final game 11/9 and so the match 3-2 against a very good Irish player. So, Wales had made a great start defeating Ireland 4-1 (19/8)

Wales v England

Matches on Saturday morning started at the slightly later time of 10.30am and we were against England (who had defeated Scotland 20-0 on Friday night). Alan Coppack again played at number 5. He was against John Parkes and lost the opening game 5/11. However, Alan was undaunted and superbly won the next game 11/5. He battled valiantly in the next two games also but succumbed in each 5/11 and so ultimately lost the match 1-3. However, this was an excellent result considering it was Alan's first master's Home Internationals. Mark Huxtable made his first appearance of the weekend playing at number 3 against Darren Withey. Not an easy task against the England captain but Mark worked hard in every rally and fought for every point in his 3/11, 4/11, 6/11 defeat. At number 1 string Gary Hales played Eamon Price. The two had met in the Over 50's Home Internationals last year and the result this year was similar. Though Gary battled hard, the slightest loose shot was punished every time by Eamon. Eamon made hardly any unforced errors in his 11/5, 11/4, 11/6, 3-0 victory. Mike Logan was next on court playing at number 4 string and had hopes of repeating the excellent match he played against England last year, when he narrowly lost in the fifth. This year against David Gray the first game went to 10-all with Mike narrowly losing it 10/12. Mike was just a little too loose in the next two games and he lost them 5/11 and 6/11 to lose the match 0-3. Finally, Nick Guard played at number 2 against Alex Betts. Nick had Alex in trouble in the first and third games and was unlucky not to win at least one game but eventually lost 9/11, 4/11, 9/11. So, a 0-5 (1-20) defeat to England with Alan picking up our solitary point.

Wales v Scotland

The afternoon matches started at 2.30pm. Scotland had defeated Ireland 4-1 in the morning and so the winners of the Wales v Scotland match would effectively decide 2nd and 3rd places. Mike Logan at number 5 string was against Norman Patterson. This was a hard hitting, fast-paced contest which you knew was going to be very tight. Mike lost the first 6/11 but won the second 11/8. The next two games followed exactly the same pattern and score-line as Mike lost the third 6/11 and won the fourth 11/8. The fifth game was going to be crucial to the outcome of the whole contest and Mike showed his strength and determination to win it 11/9 and so the match 3-2. A good start for Wales but Nick Guard at number 3 was unable to

maintain this. Nick was up against the unpredictable Ronnie Carter and after losing the opening two games 7/11, 7/11, Nick made a great effort in the third game but lost it by the narrowest of margins 11/13 and so the match 0-3. Gary Hales was playing Jimmy Wells at number 1 string. The two players had not met for several years and it was Jimmy who made the stronger start by racing to a 9/3 lead. However, Gary did not panic and calmly played his way into the game taking it 11/9. Gary maintained his control in both the second and third games taking them 11/6 and 11/3 respectively, giving him a 3-0 win. So, Wales led 2-1 in the contest and needed just Mark or Simon to win to defeat Scotland. Mark Huxtable at number 4 string was playing Keith Murray and did not make the best of starts losing the opening game 3-11. However, in the second game Mark introduced to hit a few more straight drives and straight drops, which started to bring success and he won the next two games 11/8, 11/7 respectively. The fourth game was very tight with Mark working very hard. The rallies were long and tiring but Mark kept his composure and accuracy to take that fourth game 11/8 and so the match 3-1. This gave Wales a 3-1 lead with just the number 2 players yet to play. Simon Bourge was against Chris Holt. In the first game Simon played as well as he had done against Ireland hitting the ball hard and low, making his opponent frantically scramble around the court to retrieve the ball. However, Chris was retrieving unbelievably and no matter how good Simon's shot was Chris managed to stay in the rally and then turn the tables on Simon. The first game was really close with Chris taking it 11/9 after that Simon did not play badly but Chris's retrieving, and accuracy of play remained constantly high and Chris took the next two games 11/1 and 11/2. So, Wales had beaten Scotland 3-2 (14-16). Final positions: England (1st), Wales (2nd), Scotland (3rd), Ireland (4th).

Gary Hales

Wales Over 55's Men's Team Captain 2019

