

Czech Boccia Championships April 21st – 22nd 2007

A squad of 7 athletes and 11 support staff flew to Prague to represent England and Wales at the *International Czech Championships in Boccia*.

The athletes were: BC1. Nicholas Allen.

BC2. Dan Bentley, Zoe Robinson & Rachael Benhamou.

BC3. Lee Maddison & Emma Harris.

BC4. Emma Turner.

Play started at 9a.m. on Saturday morning, so after an early start and breakfast the coach picked us up and took us to the venue. Nicholas and Zoe were playing in the first round of matches and were in the Call Up room at 8.40a.m. Both players made an excellent start with Nicholas beating Petruncikova 11 – 0 and Zoe beating Zemanova 19 – 0.

The next round of matches saw Dan and Rachael in the Call Up room at 9.20a.m. Although Dan won 2 ends, Curinova played the game of her life and Dan lost 2 – 3. Rachael kept us all on the edge of our seats with a 5 – 4 win against Pizarikova.

Next up, it was Lee and Emma Harris in the call up room at 10.00 a.m. unfortunately Lee lost 1 – 4 to Smilauer, while Emma recorded a good 4 – 1 victory over Petrementova.

11.00 a.m. saw Emma Turner in the call up room for her match against Merunka and Emma came away from this one with a good 6 – 2 win.

So now everybody had played his or her first game. Things were looking quite good, 7 matches played 5 wins and 2 losses. A good start!

But there was no time to rest, 11.40a.m. Zoe and Rachael are both back in the call up room. Unfortunately Zoe lost this game to Serbus, World ranked 9, 1 – 4. Rachael played Vlk, and also lost by the same score, 1 – 4.

Then there was a break in play for the England and Wales players and lunch was taken, but in no time at all it was back to work, with Emma Harris next in Call Up at 13.20 p.m. She was playing Svoboda and lost every end by one. The final score 0 – 4.

Nicholas re – entered the fray and went to Call Up at 14.20 p.m. for his match against Grusser, World ranked 58. Nicholas duly dispatched him with a 6 – 3 victory.

Dan and Rachael were next in Call Up at 15.00 p.m, with Dan, World ranked 80 playing Korinek, World ranked 29 and 14th in the recent World Championships in Brazil. This game went with the World rankings with Dan losing 2 – 5. Rachael played Tomas and recorded an emphatic 6 – 1 victory.

It was now time for Lee and Emma Harris to return to the Call Up room at 15.40. Lee played Krenek, World ranked 19. After 2 ends Lee was 3 – 0 up, but Krenek used all of his experience and pulled it back to a final score of 3 – 3, and then went on to win the tie break, disappointment for Lee. Emma was playing Svecova and despite winning 2 ends, she lost 4 – 6.

For the last of the matches in the group stages, Emma Turner was in Call Up at 16.40 p.m. for her match against Kratina, World ranked 20. This match resulted in a 1 – 9 defeat for Emma.

The results meant that Nicholas qualified for the ¼ finals as he was top of his group. Zoe and Rachael qualified for the ¼ finals as they were second in their respective groups, as did Emma Turner, who was second in her group.

Lee, Emma Harris and Dan all finished 3rd in their groups.

But play on Saturday was still not finished. 17.20 p.m. saw Nicholas, Zoe and Rachael in the Call Up room eagerly awaiting their ¼ finals. Nicholas was playing Hynkova and had a resounding 8 – 0 victory. Zoe played Pisarikova and had a good 9 – 2 win. Rachael met Serbus, and the World number 9 used all of his experience to leave Rachael with a 0 – 11 loss.

So that was Saturday over, Emma Turner had her ¼ final to play on Sunday morning, a very tough match against Prochazka, World ranked 10 and 4th place in the World Championships in Rio de Janeiro last October. Nicholas had a semi final against Duzevicova and Zoe had a semi final against Korinek World ranked 29 and 14th in the recent World Championships in Brazil.

Sunday morning, a slight lay in as Emma Turner was first in Call Up at 9.30 a.m. for her match with Prochazka, which turned out to be as tough as we thought it would be, with Emma losing 1 – 9 to the very talented Czech player.

Zoe and Nicholas were in call up for their semi finals at 10.25 a.m. Nicholas recorded a 4 – 1 win and was now in the final. Zoe played well, but unfortunately lost to her more experienced opponent, 2 – 3.

Onto the final for Nicholas and the 3rd/4th place play off for Zoe. They were in Call Up for 12.05. Nicholas played Mrkvickova and lost 2 – 3. Runner up, a result I'm sure Nicholas would have been happy with before leaving home, but having got to the final, I'm sure he was possibly a little disappointed.

Zoe played Triskova and romped to victory with some outstanding play, recording a 10 – 1 victory. So 3rd place for Zoe, in what was a tough BC2 competition.

Final Places

BC1 Nicholas Allen: 2nd place

BC2 Zoe Robinson: 3rd place
Rachael Benamou: 8th place
Dan Bentley: 12th place

BC3 Emma Harris: 9th place
Lee Maddison: 12th place

BC4 Emma Turner 7th place.

Congratulations to all of the athletes, I know some of you were disappointed with your own performance but you showed your support for your fellow players, which I know they appreciated.

Finally thank you to all of the staff. Without your support, no matter how good the athletes are, they would not achieve the level of success that they do, so on behalf of the players, thank you.

Barry Bowden.