

GLOUCESTER TEAMS REIGN SUPREME AT FINALS

The Men:

Cotswold Cavaliers 359-337 Pin Ups

Cotswold Cavaliers became the new Blackthorn British Skittles Men's Champions as they brushed aside the top seeds in an amazing show of grit, determination and team form at the Grand Finals on Saturday 23rd September 2006 at Sand Bay Holiday village, Weston-super-Mare.

The team from Gloucestershire was dealt a tough hand in the live draw held the evening before: a first round meeting against the 2004 and 2005 champions Skimmers from Dorset. But they produced a shock result to overturn the champs and progress through to a final against championship runners-up for the past 2 years Pin-ups. It wasn't all plain sailing though. Their quarter-final meeting with Masters went to the wire. They hung on by only 1 pin to claim a semi-final place in which they overwhelmed one of the other championship favourites Mashers from Barnstaple, the team that scored the most pins in qualification.

Pin-ups, also from Dorset, boasted a 100% winning record and were Number 1 seeds coming into the Grand Finals. Their use of the double-handed method of ball projection had proved successful in their unbeaten run on the way to the final with wins over Berry Hill Billies from Lydney, Bath City and a gigantic 72-pin victory over Worcester's Westsiders in their semi-final. So, all expectations were for Pin-Ups to finally claim the Championship title. After the first two legs there was nothing to choose between the two teams. Only in the third leg did a lead appear for the Cavaliers as Rob and Bob Stinchcombe produced scores of 16 and 14 respectively. Bob Stinchcombe's top form continued in the next leg with good support from Derek James to stretch the lead further and beyond the reach of Pin-Ups to take the title 359-337.

Winning team captain Mark Messer was ecstatic with the win: "We're thrilled to have won the title. The Championships have been great. Competition has been much stronger than in previous years and we would like to thank all the teams for their sporting approach to all the matches." He said. Tony Dean from the Pin-Ups was highly disappointed: "We were aggrieved to find we were unable to adjust our playing technique to the alley in the final as we had battled hard all summer to qualify and be here." He said.

The road to the men's final:

	Cotswold Cavaliers	Pin Ups
Round 1	Skimmers (Dorchester) 350-334	Berry Hill Billies (Lydney) 344-336
Q-finals	Masters (Bridport) 343-342	Bath City (Bath) 369-354
Semi-final	Mashers (Barnstaple) 359-342	Westsiders (Worcester) 375-303

The Ladies:

Titbits 339-309 Wyke Orbits

Gloucestershire celebration continued at Dorset's expense once again in the Ladies event as Titbits from Berkley never looked likely to slip up against the double-handed throwing technique demonstrated by Wyke Orbits from Wyke Regis.

Titbits won a convincing first round match dismissing the 2004 Ladies champions Railway Rockers from Cardiff while Joanne Noble took the lead with some great support from Christine Andrews to lead from the front and amass a 14-pin win over the 2004 runners-up Tryhards from Cheltenham. The semi-final clash against Championship debutants Oakettes also from Dorset, was a nail-biter as a valiant Oakettes' late charge was just 3 pins short of a victory.

Wyke Orbits had disposed of Weston's Born Again Virgins, last year's quarter-finalists Grasshoppers and last year's semi-finalists Jolly Girls both from Gloucester. Like the Men's, the final was another incredible close affair early on. It was not until the third leg that the difference began to show and Wyke Orbits were unable to match high individual scores from Marie Harris, Christine Andrews, Joanne Cooper and captain Ellen Sealey as Titbits pulled away to Championship glory and the title. Final score: Titbits 339 Wyke Orbits 309.

The Titbits captain wanted to thank everyone especially Men's team The Posh for their support: "These Championships were fabulous" she said, adding: "We prepared with plenty of liquid refreshment throughout the day and found the competition quite beatable by the afternoon and evening sessions." She said. Liz Kent from the Wyke Orbits thanked her team: "The team has been great to be able to adjust to the conditions and reach the final." She said.

The road to the ladies final:

	Titbits	Wyke Orbits
Round 1	Railway Rockers (Cardiff) 371-313	Born Again Virgins (W-S-M) 347-319
Q-finals	Tryhards (Cheltenham) 331-317	Grasshoppers (Gloucester) 294-280
Semi-final	Oakettes (Blandford) 306-304	Jolly Girls (Gloucester) 334-316

The Mixed:

AKA Predators 325-307 Muppets

The Mixed event saw current champions AKA Predators from Weston-Super-Mare hold on to their title in a fantastic final against Muppets from Ross-on-Wye.

Convincing wins all the way saw the Predators reach the final as Yetties from Budleigh Salterton, Dave's Battlers from Chippenham and Calne's Wreckers all yielded to the Predator's attack. Chris Thorne produced a marvellous 59 while team-mate Steve Sharland topped it with a massive 62 along the way.

Debutants Muppets defeated new teams all the way to the final: The Management from Dorchester, Bristol's Beach Bums and Cullompton's Crossways, so this was the first clash against Championship experience. In the end, AKA Predators' experience paid dividends. A nervous Muppets came to the alley and accrued some good, but not outstanding scores. AKA Predators put on an unassailable team display. Solid scores across the board saw AKA Predators win with a controlled professional performance 325-307.

Winning team secretary Shaun Malone collected his £1000 prize money and trophy to a rousing reception from his team: "We defended our title with venom." He said, and continued: "This year was very tough. The qualifying stages were harder, but we pulled through in the end. The keg of Blackthorn cider we won for the best Home Alley last year kept us going through the season and I'm sure that helped our success this year" he said. Ros Evans team captain from Muppets was exhausted, but happy with her team's performance: "Competition was very hot, the overall championships have been brilliant and we would recommend them to anyone." She said.

The road to the mixed final:

	AKA Predators	Muppets
Round 1	Yetties (Budleigh Salterton) 326-302	The Management (Dorchester) 330-317
Q-finals	Dave's Battlers (Chippenham) 360-340	Beach Bums (Bristol) 361-316
Semi-final	Wreckers (Calne) 321-305	Crossways (Hele) 333-321

All winning teams received cheques for £1000 and runners-up received £500 sponsored by Blackthorn.