

Friday 16th and Saturday 17th June 2017

Two players from the IDTTL took a trip to France this weekend, to take place in club-organised tournaments in the Nantes area. Martin Tomes of Britannia TTC, Ipswich joined Sylvain Floury of Kingsfleet TTC, Felixstowe, who comes from the area and still has ties/family there.

Friday evening was hosted by Thouare TTC, a small club who have the use of a school sports complex out of school hours and term time, along with all other community sporting groups. They have an office/store and a Table Tennis room that can host 10 tables for coaching, but for the Doubles tournament they took 10 tables into the main sports hall. 34 club members plus the two guests played for 5 hours, all partners swapped to find the most successful doubles player of the event. It was a noisy and thoroughly enjoyable event involving many junior and female players.

The club is "modest" by local standards but has access to facilities better than any in the Ipswich area. Their welcome was whole hearted and the mid-session banquet had to be seen to be believed. Magnifique!

From a personal point of view, most of the senior members introduced themselves and shook hands with me as they arrived. All games were competitive and sporting, with everyone happy to try their English on the visitor.

Saturday saw the 10th hosting of the Avrille 12 heures tournoi, a marathon team tournament nominally from noon to midnight (we finished after 1am...) where 28 x 3 person teams played 8 matches each in one sports hall. That's a lot of table tennis, and in 34 degree temperatures quite a marathon, but again, the large number of talented juniors, female and disabled players made the event fully inclusive. After each round the winning team bought the losing team a drink from the bar, which also offered barbecued sandwiches plus a range of soft drinks and cakes.

The standard was consistently high, but with handicaps it was competitive throughout. Sporting and fun (one team wore hats and bow ties all day!), this was a consistently higher standard than any of the Suffolk events I've attended, with a noticeable number of strong juniors.

The organisers were pleased that this year became an international event with our attendance, and for the 6th place finish we won a T shirt each and local produce of Shallots and Asparagus. Looking forward to next year.

As for the venue, there were 16 tables in the hall, full changing and shower facilities, bar/cafe room and outdoor barbecue. Proper family occasion.

After a hot and tiring weekend it might be a little early to draw too many conclusions, but the casual enthusiasm of everyone participating was striking. Table tennis is not a niche sport, it is a game that any age, sex, level of ability and many states of physical fitness can play, and they do. There are good sporting facilities being used every day of the year, pretty much, not locked and unused out of school hours, just part of the community.

Notable, by the way, that the 2016 European champion comes from this area....

Martin Tomes, Chair, Britannia TTC







