

## 11U Girls National Finals Wrexham

July 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> 2023

Our 11U Team made up of Eloise Doumbia, Emilia House, Emma Fitzgerald, Eleanor Chapman and Anya Ahearn made the trip up to Wrexham for the National Finals over the weekend Of 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> July.

This was the first time that this age group has changed format which meant based on the girls' rankings, the team qualified directly to the National Finals. This was brilliant as it rewarded the players for all their hard work individually over the year but it did mean that we did not get a more local regional event to build the team morale and get a look at how the girls competed in both singles and doubles before the National Finals.



Thankfully the team were already a close knit group with experience together at previous county cups and they came to the event full of energy and determination which was great!

The format of the event had two groups of 4 counties. The first 2 days we would play a round robin against the other teams in our box (Surrey, Middlesex and Lancashire) with the 3<sup>rd</sup> day consisting of playing the opposite ranked county following the box stages (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> in box A played 1<sup>st</sup> in box B for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place).

The first day of play was a beautiful sunny Friday and we played 1<sup>st</sup> seeds Surrey outdoors on the acrylic courts. We knew this was a very tough opponent but the girls did not seem fazed and were ready for the challenge. Eleanor and Emma were first to face Surrey in the singles at position 4 and 3 and although Emma managed to fight to a first set tiebreak, both girls lost in straight sets. Emilia competed at position 2 in the team and similarly to Emma did a fantastic job to fight to a tie break; this time in the second set but the Surrey opposition played well to take the match. An incredible comeback from Eloise at 1 saw the last singles go to a 10 point shoot out but she narrowly lost out to an in form Surrey number one, also ranked number 1 in the country, 10-3 in the championship tiebreak. So into the doubles where Eloise and Emma lost out 4-2, 4-2 at number one pair but Emilia and Eleanor dug out an incredible win at 2<sup>nd</sup> pair, this time winning the Championship tiebreak 10-4. Final result 5-1 to Surrey.

We started the next fixture verses Middlesex (who had lost to Lancashire 4-2) on the Friday afternoon. Anya debuted at number 4 singles, losing out to a strong opposition. Emma brought the fixture back to 1-1 with a second set tiebreak win, a great result to keep the pressure on. Both Emilia and Eloise faced incredibly strong opposition and unfortunately we could not take either of the remaining singles, leaving us 3-1 going into the doubles matches that were to be played on Saturday morning. We had worked very hard on our doubles leading up to this event and the girls played tactically smart and positive doubles and were so close to getting us results in both games. Unfortunately Eleanor and Emilia lost in the second set tiebreak and Eloise and Emma again made it to a 10 point championship tiebreak but the opposition stepped up to take it. Final result 5-1 Middlesex.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> and final group match was verses Lancashire who had so far won one and lost one fixture. We were scheduled indoors for this fixture which clearly suited some of our players. Eleanor put in a brilliant performance at number 4 singles, winning the rubber 10-4 in the championship tiebreak. Luck went the other way in Emilia's singles at 3 with a loss 10-4 in her 3<sup>rd</sup> set championship tiebreak. Lancashire 1 and 2 singles proved too strong for Eloise and we were again 3-1 after singles. This time all the doubles work paid off! Eleanor and Emilia sailed through the 2<sup>nd</sup> pair doubles in straight sets. Eloise and Emma had a nail biting 3<sup>rd</sup> set championship tiebreak (again!) but won it 12-10... resulting in our first match tiebreak shoot out of the weekend. With all the girls keen to play, it was a tough decision on the pairing; but with momentum on Eleanor's side for the day and Emma playing very well, the two paired up and smashed the shoot out to bring us our first win of the weekend! The girls were over the moon and they deserved the win!



Despite 3 of the 4 teams only getting one win, we finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the box due to rubbers count back. The left us with a 7/8<sup>th</sup> position playoff against South Wales on Sunday.

We were back indoors on the Sunday. Eleanor and Emma were back on for 4 and 3 singles, finishing the round 1-1 with a win from Emma 4-1,4-1. Of course both Emilia and Eloise's singles matches went to the wire and two 10 point tiebreak 3<sup>rd</sup> sets... Emilia losing out on hers 10-8 but Eloise pulling through and taking the win 10-6! 2-2 going into the doubles. Anya, who had been patiently and brilliantly supporting her team mates stepped up into 2<sup>nd</sup> pair doubles with Emma and they stormed

that match in straight sets. Eloise and Eleanor teamed up but fell to a strong first pair in the 2<sup>nd</sup> set tiebreak... 3-3 on rubbers, we had another shootout! For this last decider Eloise and Emma joined forces as they had already played 3 doubles matches together over the weekend and convincingly won us the shootout, dominating the tiebreak. A huge win for the girls and earned us 7<sup>th</sup> place at National Finals- wow!

As well as wonderful on tennis on court, the weekend was full of positivity and support from the whole team and the parents that kindly joined us to help and support the girls. Mixed in with some thunderstorms, a lot of spikeball, a rap off with South Wales, some Macarena dancing warmup (Emma) and a lot of strange food concoctions at breakfast and dinner, it all added up to a brilliant weekend. The team dynamics were great to work with and the girls understanding of being a team and working together was exceptional. The team were the best representation of Avon and both myself and Pete were very proud Avon captains. We look forward to seeing these girls back for next years 12U county cup.