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Wales European Squash Masters Open 2016 – Age is but a number!

Over the weekend of 9th-11th December Cardiff welcomed 130 squash players from all over Europe for the Wales leg of the 2016 European Squash Federation's (ESF), European Masters Circuit. The first time the Wales Masters Open has been included on the European Circuit.

Masters Squash is for all players over the age of 35 with tournaments and competitions for both men and women in five year age categories from 35+, 40+, 45+....etc up to 75+. Many participants are ex full international squash players with a desire to continue a high level of competition after their earlier achievements, although many participants could also be late developers or players who took up the game later on in life. But all have one thing in common, and that is that they have achieved a high standard in the sport.



With the large entry the tournament was dually hosted by Squash Wales at Sport Wales National Centre in Sophia Gardens and Cardiff Squash Rackets Club just a few hundred metres away, and with the official tournament hotel being The Angel, the set-up provided an excellent combination, right in the heart of Cardiff City Centre with its numerous visitor attractions and some superb Christmas shopping close at hand to compliment the Squash.

The weekend kicked off at mid-day Friday with some close encounters going on until late in the evening. After a quick shower, the 'just as important' social side got into swing with a buffet and for those who perhaps hadn't exerted too much energy during the day there was plenty of late night dancing to an excellent Welsh singer.

An early start Saturday for some, saw matches on court at 9am although one or two did need rousing by the organisers, forever looking at their watches with such a busy schedule to get through. Again matches continued throughout the day and well into the evening before the competitors and their guests were treated to a traditional Welsh Pub experience and meal in the Castle Bar below the Angel Hotel. The meal together with a disco and some short speeches again saw those fitter souls leave just as much sweat on the dance floor as the squash court. In fact it could be argued that one or two of the 70+ category put to shame their younger counterparts in the weekend stamina stakes...it's amazing what a beer or two can do for those aching limbs!



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Again an early start on Sunday morning saw some players regretting their antics the night before, but all were present and began battling out the final stages of the tournament, right up to the early afternoon finals. It was interesting to walk around the courts watching the different age groups competing and recognising that age only really affects the sometimes brutal, physical aspects of the game.... the racket skills however never leave!

Following the final matches, presentations to the winners, runners-up and third place players in each category was performed by Christina Rees MP, a great supporter of Squash in Wales and herself an ex Welsh International Player.

All competitors had only good things to say about their first Welsh tournament experience and the City of Cardiff generally. A vote of thanks must go out to all of those who made this tournament a great success with special thanks to Lynne Davies and Mike Workman of Squash Wales, the Wales Masters Committee, the referees, the front desk staff in both venues, the sponsors, and of course the players for coming to Cardiff and making the first Wales European Masters Open a resounding success. Bring on 2017!

Words by Nick Guard , Wales Masters Chairman.



Thanks to Laura Lloyd Lewis for the photographs and Shaky for the Live Streaming – Go to - http://www.wallessquashandracketball.co.uk/bourse-welsh-masters-open-2016/info_252.html



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