



Ireland Juniors claim 3 titles at the Irish Junior Open in Stillorgan

The Junior Irish Open took place at the weekend (Nov 2-4, 2012) and there were some stunning results for Irish bowlers.

This event is the pinnacle of junior bowling in Ireland and now being part of the Youth European Tour (YET) attracts young players from across Europe who make the trip looking to become Irish Open champion.

But this year it was the home-grown talent which shone through the brightest as two Irish females and an Irish male took the title in three separate age groups.

Adult Team Ireland player Simon English, at just twenty years of age, looked cool and composed all weekend as he struck his way to the Under 24 title ahead of a host of talented players including some top Irish juniors and also top players from Europe from countries such as Scotland and Belgium.

English averaged 222 through the first two rounds to lead the tournament going into the final round robin section, which would pit him against three other qualifiers in head-to-head matchplay. Two of these three other finalists were also Irish juniors, Aidan Byrne and Karl Doherty, proving just how strong youth bowling is in Ireland at the moment.

Despite all matches being tight, English never allowed himself to lose his cool and in the end was just too strong for the competition, eventually winning by a margin of 23 pins.

Simon will also be representing Ireland at the World Cup at the end of this month, and everybody at the Irish Tenpin Bowling Association and in the Irish bowling community wishes him the best of the luck.

In the girls Under 19 section it was an Irish one-two as Sarah Finlay took the title ahead of rival Amanda Larkin.

As with all age groups this year there was a host of young talent vying for the crown, both from Ireland and overseas. In this category there was a particularly strong contingent Swedish and Dutch girls who had made the trip.

But Finlay and Larkin showed no signs of nerves or intimidation at the talent which had come from Europe as they took control of this section in round two, and they never let up in the round robin section as they powered to a spectacular result for Irish junior ladies bowling.

In the male Under 19 section Christopher Sloan just missed out on the title after a stunning effort in the final game of the round robin final. Going into the final game few gave the young Irishman a chance, but Sloan showed that he has learned a lot from recent trips to Europe for big Adult tournaments by putting in a magnificent game of 278.

After nine strikes in a row from the start of the final game, spectators were geared up in the hope of seeing a second perfect 300 game of the weekend after Ireland's Matthew Kestell had posted the first in qualifying earlier in the weekend.

However, the spectacular run came to a heart-breaking end in the tenth frame as Sloan could only manage an eight-spare to eventually finish in second place, agonisingly just five pins behind the winner Pontus Anderson of Sweden.

Possibly most spectacular of all though was the victory of Emma Dungan in the Girls Under 16 section.

Dungan, just 13 years old, only took up the sport a few months ago and has progressed at an astonishing rate.

The young Irish lady led the tournament from start to finish, holding off the defending champion Sjoanita Brommer of the Netherlands to eventually win the title by a comfortable 46 pins.

This was truly a remarkable achievement for Emma and it only emphasises the exciting times which lay ahead for Irish bowling, with a host of even younger players coming through as well, seen in the Under 12 Boys section, where despite a young Scottish boy, Euan Coote, winning the next six positions were all taken by Irish boys.

The future is bright for tenpin bowling in Ireland; watch out for a host of talented young players making the headlines in the coming year when we also celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Tenpin Bowling in Ireland.