

THE WEMBLEY "OPEN"

by
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*History is Made . . . Television
and
History Repeated . Bergmann v. Barna*

In having its Finals televised, the 1947 Wembley "Open" made Table Tennis history. Exhibitions, we know, have frequently appeared on the television screen during the past season, but an open tournament presents several difficulties. "Hats off," then, to the Wembley organisers, who skilfully arranged the timing of events so that spectators and B.B.C. technicians were all happy. The players, too, must be commended for their splendid performances under the great heat of the television lighting equipment.

The programme opened with the **Men's Singles Semi-Final**, between **Richard Bergmann** and **Johnny Leach**, which resulted in a win for Bergmann in two straight games. Leach was using his stylish backhand to good advantage but lacked confidence in his forehand on several occasions when the ball was "there." Bergmann gave little away throughout the two games and won the match on merit. The other **Men's Singles Semi-Final** saw **Viktor Barna** in dazzling form against **Ron Crayden**, who has won several titles this season. Crayden played well but could not hold Barna on the form the latter was displaying. His "flick" and drop shot gained him point after point and few players in the World could have found an answer to his wonderful attack.

Challenge from Staines

It was interesting to see a comparatively little known pair, **Mrs. M. Bennett** and **Mrs. P. Pitcher** of Staines in the Final of the **Women's Doubles**. They had only two weeks previously reached the Final of the Bucks "Open" so



**WINNING
PAIR**
Doris Rivett
(left)
and
Betty Wilkinson

maybe this augurs well for the future. Their opponents were the well-known East London players **Betty Wilkinson** and **Doris Rivett**, who came off winners after two deuce games. Best shots of this match were four of Betty Wilkinson's forehand drives which she made from her backhand wing.

The **Mixed Doubles Final** opened with fireworks from **Irene Lentle**, who was partnering **Johnny Leach** against **Viktor Barna** and **Vera Dace**. However, Viktor and Vera soon made up the leeway and playing well together won quite comfortably 21-12; 21-14.

Men's Doubles Thrills

Johnny Leach made his third appearance in the **Men's Doubles Final** and this time he was deservedly successful. He and **Jack Carrington** started in brilliant fashion against **Richard Bergmann** and **Steve Boros**, taking the first game 21-8. The second game produced more rallies—Bergmann was hitting well and Boros was "finding his feet," but even so, Jack and Johnny "got home" by 21-18. In the third and fourth games, Boros brought off several fine forehand winners while his backhand half-volley was as safe as usual. Bergmann played a sound game, using in place of the accepted orthodox stroke that same "continental style" backhand drive, which brought back memories of Szabados and Liebster, while his follow through, after each forehand smash was, as near as possible, perfect. As a result of this fine form, Bergmann and Boros took the third and fourth games 21-16 and 21-13. The fifth game saw both pairs fighting for every point and the standard of play was extremely high. Leach flicked well and every now and then would make a winning forehand smash, but generally Carrington was more aggressive. Time and again Jack Carrington would, with a very quick action, flick a "winner" straight from service and throughout the match he took a very early ball with great accuracy. The last game finally went to Carrington and Leach 21-17.

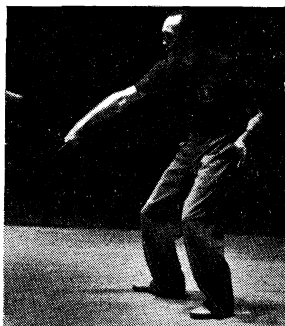
The **Women's Singles Final** between **Vera Dace** and **Pinkie Barnes**, was just the thing to draw the spectators from the Refreshment counter (Who said "choco-

late cream buns"?) following the interval. It was a really exciting match and I have seldom seen "Pinkie" play so well—she placed the ball cleverly, chopped well and her tactics were very sound throughout the two games, both of which she just lost to hard hitting Vera.

The Classic Final

Then came the match of the evening—the **Men's Singles Final** between **Barna** and **Bergmann**. I wish this match could have been switched back to the Empire Pool on the night of the English Open Finals—it would have gladdened the hearts of the nine thousand spectators who watched the very ordinary all Czech Semi-Finals and Final.

Barna's flick was working beautifully, and every so often he would demonstrate the value of a good drop shot. Bergmann moved about like a panther, to return Barna's most vicious flicks, but Viktor gradually built up a useful lead and later resisted a fine attempt by Richard to pull up. First game to Barna **21—17**. The second game produced more brilliant play, mainly by Barna, with Bergmann covering ground at an amazing speed to return seemingly certain winners. Barna then appeared to lose much of the strength in his right arm and his flicks lacked their earlier sting. Bergmann soon appreciated this and mixed his game cleverly to win **21—11**. The third game was very similar—the same beautiful Barna flicks and Bergmann methodically working up with that backhand drive waiting for the opportunity to make a forehand kill which he did often enough to win **21—12**. The fourth game saw both players in brilliant form, with Bergmann taking a substantial early lead. Then the spectators were treated to a complete repertoire of Barna shots—shots which no other player would dare attempt at such a crucial stage—Viktor was now



GALLANT
FINALIST

Viktor
Barna
in a
fighting
rally

gaining ground. With now only three points difference, a fifth game seemed possible, despite the fact that Viktor was making few winners with his backhand flick. Then it was Richard's turn to increase his lead by fine hitting and it seemed that the match would soon be finished. But then followed three successive forehand drives from Barna—all winners that nobody in the World could have returned. Two edges then went against Viktor, and Richard combining magnificent defence with terrific hitting, went on to win the next few points and with them the game and the match. A better Final could not have been wished for.

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Looking back on the earlier rounds, the best performance was achieved by Bernard Crouch and Michael Thornhill, both of Staines, who in the last 16 of the Men's Doubles took Bergmann and Boros to "19 in the third game." Umpire of the week was Harry Lentle, always pulling his weight, always speaking distinctly. The schedule was planned and operated well and conditions were as usual, very good (Don't blush, Mr. Decker!).

To the organisers (turn up your Programmes for names) we say "A good job well done!" Thank you, Wembley—we'll be back next year!

RESULTS.

Men's Singles, Semi-Final—

R. Bergmann beat J. Leach 21—14, 21—12.

V. Barna beat R. Crayden 21—14, 21—9.

Final—

R. Bergmann beat V. Barna 17—21, 21—11, 21—12, 21—13.

Women's Singles, Final—

Miss V. S. Dace beat Miss L. R. Barnes

21—19, 21—17.

Men's Doubles, Final—

J. Leach and J. Carrington beat R. Berg-

mann and I. Boros 21—8, 21—18, 16—21,

13—21, 21—17.

Women's Doubles, Final—

The Misses B. Wilkinson and D. Rivett

beat Mrs. M. Bennett and Miss P. Pitcher

22—20, 24—22.

Mixed Doubles, Final—

V. Barna and Miss V. S. Dace beat J.

Leach and Mrs. I. Lentle 21—12, 21—14.

NEW BIRMINGHAM WINNER

The new champion of Birmingham T.T.A. is Wally Poole. With his strong forehand attack he out-hit first the holder, Bobby Mackay, then the clever all-rounder W. Hall, and finally the strongly defensive Geoff. Alderton. Veteran Alderton, now home from the R.A.F., accounted for Maurice Kriss in the semi.

Women's Singles Final: Mrs. Coleman beat Miss Brain narrowly.

Junior champion is D. Heath who defeated D. Nightingale in a hard 3-set final.