

GRAND SLAM TOURNAMENT DUBLIN IRELAND

On Saturday 19th September 2009 the National team of England had been invited to take part in the newly revamped Grand Slam tournament which historically involved 5 nations, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France. Unfortunately on this occasion the team from France could not attend, however it is hoped that in the future France will accept the invitation back to this tournament which I am sure in time will become a major event in the 5 nation's calendar.

The England representatives for this tournament consisted of the following athletes:

Men's Team

Davin Pack



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Tom Canham



Lee Heath



Steven Heath



Michael Campbell



Cheyne Philips



Gareth Hains



Female Team

Rio Smith



Kerry Gunn



Chloe Sheldon



Nicole Halsall



Siobhan Hayes



ONAKAI the organisers of this event devised a method whereby instead of counting the number of ippons scored by the team collectively they would award each win by a team member 3 points and award all ties with 1 point. The actual ippons scored in the match would only come into play if there was a situation where two teams had the same number of points scored at the end of all bouts.

Ladies Event

The female Scottish team were not present at this event which meant that the three remaining teams would all fight each other twice. With rules out of the way the female team of England were first up to compete against the host nation Ireland. The female team for this bout was as follows:

1st Round ENGLAND VS IRELAND

- 1) Rio Smith
- 2) Siobhan Haynes
- 3) Kerry Gunn

Although expected but never to be taken for granted, the win against Ireland was very convincing with Rio delivering no less than 3 jodan kicks on her opponent and eventually winning her first fight 10 : 1. Siobhan had a harder time against her opponent but still manage to hold a 3:3 draw which gained the team a vital point. Kerry Gunn wrapped up the win against Ireland with a hard fought but very determined 6:5 win against her Irish opponent. England 7 points: Ireland 1 point.

The England female team next opponents were Wales, the team line up for this round was as follows;

2nd Round ENGLAND VS WALES

- 1) Chloe Sheldon
- 2) Rio Smith
- 3) Kerry Gunn

For Chloe the event would be her debut as an England international, and after a very slow start manage to find her legs and won her match 5:3. Rio once again stepped on to the mat and showed her quality, convincingly beating her opponent 9:0. Kerry Gunn brought up the rear but had to contend with a much harder opponent, however she did well and manage a 0:0 draw to secure the team a point. An England victory 7 points: Wales 1 point.

The bout between Ireland and Wales ended with Wales winning the match with 2 wins to 1. Wales 6 points: Ireland 3 points.

3rd Round ENGLAND VS WALES

The England female team opponents were Wales, the team line up for this round was as follows;

- 1) Siobhan Haynes
- 2) Nicole Halsall
- 3) Rio Smith

Siobhan started off this bout in great style and demonstrated why she should be included in the England national squad by winning her fight 7:1. Nicole, another new comer to this level of competition, also made her debut for England. Unfortunately her 1st fight of the tournament did not favour her and lost the bout 4:7. Rio rounded up the win for the ladies but found that her opponent had become wise to her fighting style and provided a very tightly fought match which ended up 3:2 in favour of Rio. England 6 points: Wales 3 points.

4th Round ENGLAND VS IRELAND

The 4th and final bout of the tournament for England ladies was once again against the host nation Ireland. With points firmly secured this bout was about having the new comers to the squad standing on their own. The line for this match was as follows:

- 1) Chloe Sheldon
- 2) Nicole Halsall
- 3) Kerry Gunn

Chloe fight did not fare as well as expected and as a result lost her bout 0:2, the same fate also befell on Nicole who also lost 0:2. Kerry Gunn's fight was very spirited and controlled; the result was a win for Kerry 3:0. The final match result ended with England gaining 3 points: Ireland 6 points.

Although the ladies lost the last match the points accumulated from all of the matches clearly put the England ladies team at the top of the leader's board and the 2009 Grand Slam Champions. The results were as follows:

England	23 points	2009 Ladies Grand Slam Champions
Wales	16 points	
Ireland	14 points	



Men's Event

1st Round ENGLAND VS WALES

The Men's Team event had all the four countries in the mix and England's 1st match was against Wales. The England team line up was as follows:

- 1) Cheyne Philips
- 2) Davin Pack
- 3) Lee Heath
- 4) Tom Canham
- 5) Michael Campbell

The team event for Cheyne got off to a bad start, being pitted against one of Wales most experience fighters at this level, the fight was closely fought but the bout eventually ended up a 2:3 loss for Cheyne.

Davin Pack led this inexperienced and experimental team at this tournament and although having to deal with an foot injury still managed to show his experience and won the bout 1:0.

Lee Heath's debut for England was not a bad showing at this level of competition. His match was closely fought but in the end managed a 4:4 draw to secure a vital point for the team.

Tom Canham another experience member of the England squad fought a very focused and controlled fight to win his match 5:2.

Michael Campbell brought up the rear of this team event and demonstrated great potential for the future securing a hard fought match 4:3. England 10 points: Wales 4 points.

2nd Round ENGLAND VS IRELAND

The next team bout for England was against Ireland, the line up for this round against the Irish was as follows:

- 1) Steven Heath
- 2) Davin Pack
- 3) Michael Campbell
- 4) Tom Canham
- 5) Lee Heath

England's second round match against the host nation was surprisingly more difficult. Ireland had fielded their best athletes for this event and for the first time Ireland have a group of athletes that have gelled and are able to perform at an international level.

Steven's match was well fought however due to a lack of concentration and inexperience conceded at vital point just at the end of the bout to lose the match 2:3.

As mentioned before due to an injury Davin could not perform to his best, however his instructions were clear and he followed them to the letter securing a vital point for the team with a 0:0 draw against his opponent.

After his winning start in the first round Michael could not repeat the same form that he had displayed in the previous match. On this occasion his Irish opponent had the better measure of him and as result Michael lost the match 1:4.

Tom Canham displayed more of the same determined and positive approach to his fighting as he had shown in the previous round and secured a much needed 3:0 win for the team.

Needing a vital win it was left to Lee Heath to secure this for the team, however the task on this occasion was too much for him and the more experienced fighter from Ireland had no problem in defeating Lee 3:7. The final result of the match ended with England 4 points: Ireland 10 points.

3rd Round ENGLAND VS SCOTLAND

The men's team of England's 3rd and final match was against Scotland. As always our goal is to win but with a team as inexperienced as this it was time to allow the new comers to this level of competition to stand on their own and a chance for me to see how they all would perform together. As a result of that decision the line up for this match was as follows:

- 1) Cheyne Philips
- 2) Gareth Hains
- 3) Lee Heath
- 4) Michael Campbell
- 5) Steven Heath

Cheyne Philips lead the team on this campaign, and anxious to make up for the loss in the earlier round fought an excellent fight and managed to secure a 5:0 against his Scottish opponent.

Gareth Hains was brought into this last round even though he was still recovering from an ankle injury. The match was closely fought and Gareth showed promise however Gareth could not secure the win and lost the bout 0:2.

Lee may have been a little disappointed about his performance in the previous round and this could have possibly transferred itself to the next match. Lee lost the match 2:5 but a valuable lesson may have been learned and as result can only make him a better fighter.

Eager to make up for past mistakes Michael Campbell entered into his match renewed and highly motivated. The match was hard fought and challenging but in the end Michael managed to secure a much needed 5:4 win.

Needing a vital win to secure the match the task was left to Steven to secure the win for the England team. However the task on this occasion was too much for him and the fighter from Scotland defeated Lee 3:5. The final result of the match ended with England 6 points: Scotland 9 points.

With all our fights out of the way, it was left for the other teams to fight it out and total up the points. Ireland performed extremely well and as a result ended up defeating Wales and drawing against Scotland to secure the title of 2009 Grand slam Champions. The results were as follows:

Ireland	26 points	2009 Men's Grand Slam Champion
England	20 points	
Scotland	18 points	
Wales	17 points	

The win is always important; however the results of this tournament were not as important on this occasion as the experience and knowledge gained by myself and the athletes involved. I would like to thank the organisers ONAKAI and the athletes involved in this Grand

Slam tournament. In addition I would like to thank the England Men's and Ladies team and the supporters all for their efforts.



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