
Matheew Murad Results

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Discovery SportsCenter, Boyds, MD, April 15th and 16th

Every tournament has its own personality and its own character. Here, there was a clear issue of quality vs. quantity, a series of closely contested matches in the Championship event, and the most dramatic outcomes of the Tour this year in the Single Elimination matches that led to the title.

It's not possible to describe the turnout as anything but disappointing. Despite keeping the event registration open until two days prior to competition, only slightly more than one hundred players entered. Those who did attend expressed surprise at this, but as to why it happened, only those who elected not to participate can answer. Several people wondered if the Passover/Easter holiday played a role, or if, perhaps, a crowded tournament schedule in the region was the explanation. What is certain is that those who opted out missed some of the finest play of the year!

Relieved of any crowding issues, the tournament used only 16 tables, allowing spacious court sizes and preventing any delays from forming. Several events, like women's singles and the Over 60 and Over 50 events were cancelled due to lack of a competitive quorum. At the upper end of the field, however, there was deep and rich talent. The New York and New Jersey region sent us Paul David, De Tran, David Zhuang, Shao Yu and the remarkable Wang Chen. Maryland luminaries Cheng Yinghua, Han Xiao, Richard Lee and Khaleel Asgarali counter-balanced them to renew a regional rivalry that is one of the nation's best.

Best performances need to be mentioned for the Hsu family, no relation to the tournament director. In the U-950, John Hsu was runner-up to Hans Hsu, while Nathan managed to take second place in both the U-800/unrated (Vikram Raja being first) and the U-1100 where Zhao Yiheng came back from a 3-2 deficit to earn the honors.

The Ying-Lo Junior competitions saw a fine performance by Allen Wang, winner of both the Boys Under 10 and the Under 13, over Erick Shahnazari and Jimmy Zhan, respectively. Kevin Lee outpaced Charlie Sun in the Boys U-16, while Isabella Chen defeated Janice Lan for Girls U-16 laurels. Joseph Wang edged out Thomas An for Boys U-18, while the Boys U-22 was a clean win for Raghu Nadmichettu, Alden Fan finishing a worthy second.

The redoubtable Raymond Chen, who never seems to age, was the U-1550 champion, by virtue of a straight game victory over Paul Armentano. If Raymond could bottle and sell the secret of his healthy longevity, there would be plenty of takers! Edmund Mercier of Wisconsin made the trip to Maryland worthwhile, taking back trophies for his victory in the U-1700 over Lan Jianqing, and finishing second in the U-1850 to the hard-looping David Jarrin.

Charlie Sun solidified his rating position by winning the U-2000 in four games against Julian Waters, the USATT Iron Man award winner. Admiration must also be extended to Nazruddin Asgarali, Khaleel's father. He turned in one his best STIGA tour results ever, first by winning the U-2250 over young Peter Li in seven beautiful games, then by attaining victory in the U-2375, besting the skilled chopper, Kazuyuki Yokoyama (5,1,-7, 11,-8,8.) "My dad plays really well against choppers," offered the proud son. Dad plays really well against his age group, too. In the Sol Feingold Memorial Over 40, Nazruddin defeated Pennsylvania's John Wetzler before losing to De Tran and finishing second. John had managed consecutive wins against De, but Dr. Tran turned the tables this time in capturing his title.

Paul David met Christopher Teile in the U-2500 Final. Paul entered with a straight game win over three-balling Richard Lee, while Teile played a wonderful match with Yokoyama, filled with lengthy points and marvelous rallies. Teile's blocking skills couldn't contain Paul's withering forehand attack, and Paul David carried away the larger check, by scores of 9, 7, 8 and 6.

Open Singles

RR Group#1

David Zhuang, Paul David, Richard Lee, Peter Li

All the group really needed was a player to be named David Lee to be ultimately confusing. No confusion here for David Zhuang, however, who did exactly what he needed to do, defeating Richard Lee 4,5,6,9 ; Paul David 8,7,4,3 ; and Peter Li 9,-9,5,5. Peter scratched Paul David for one game, but went down 8, 7,-9, 5, 7 and finished with an 0-3 record when Richard Lee narrowly prevailed 9, 10,5,12. "He's got potential," said Richard post-match. Since he was only outscored by 12 points in four games, that seems an understatement. That left Paul David and Richard's match to find the second advancer. Paul had beaten Lee earlier in the U-2500, a nifty four straight. This was different from the start, as Richard took the first two games, 11-7, and 11-7. Game three brought a shift in tactics. Paul was ripping forehands and driving Lee back from the table into the Penhold lefty's backhand pocket with great success. Paul David took games 3, 4, and 5, by scores of 7, 5, and 5. Paul's in excellent shape, and Lee only recently returned from a lengthy hiatus, so that factor tended to be in Mr. David's favor. Lee evened the match in game six, 11-9. On his own serve, Richard was still looking for the three-ball kill that is his strength, but on serve receive he was more tactical, spreading the table, and intent on

stopping Paul from sitting on that Forehand ball. The two players showed great heart in reaching deuce in the seventh game. When the dust settled, Lee had the upset win, 12-10. „That was fun!“ the gracious Paul told me later, „I am now 1 and 2 against him, lifetime. Tell him I am practicing for him and our next meeting!“ So noted! David Zhuang and Richard Lee advanced to Sunday, the Quarterfinals.

RR Group #2

Cheng Yinghua, De Tran, John Wetzler, Yang Liu

No problems for Cheng in this set of matches, he comes through undefeated, straight games with Wetzler, 6,4,3,2; straight games with De Tran, 6,6,6,5; and a 4-1 victory over the young New Yorker, Yang Liu, 9, -9, 4,5,6. De Tran and John Wetzler both deny the youngster, who is no „walk in the park!“ Tran over Liu -2, 6, 8, 8, 8; and John gets by -9, 10, 10, 7, and 9. So, as expected, De Tran and John Wetzler will have to battle it out for the second advancer, the position. These two players are known to each other, being of comparable rating and age, and their ongoing series of encounters gets another chapter, with this particular match falling on De Tran, the side of the ledger, 9,10,-9,8,6. It, the on to the Single Elimination bracket on Sunday for Cheng and De Tran.

RR Group #3

Wang Chen, Khaleel Asgarali, Kazuyuki Yokoyama, Larry Hodges

We don't get to see Wang Chen often enough to suit me! „Cindy“ is a great player, but with the club she runs in NYC, often too busy to hit the tournament circuit. Sporting a new hairstyle, and apparently free of the nagging injuries that plagued her last season, she stepped into the hunt for the Open Singles title with style. Wang Chen is more than experienced against choppers, she shows us a 6, 4,10,2 win against Yokoyama. Wang Chen controls play, and is an experienced World Class competitor. She gives us a 9,3,3,5 win over Larry Hodges. Khaleel Asgarali is an emerging talent, just back from the Commonwealth Games. But Wang Chen is the former #4 ranked woman in the world. She hands in a 6, 1,-6, 7, 8 victory. See you tomorrow, Wang Chen! Larry Hodges has known Khaleel since he was a small boy, and jumps out to a two game lead, 11-4, 11-9. But things are not what they were when Khaleel was a small boy, he, the a man now. Despite his best tactical efforts, Larry loses the next four games, 8, 4,10,3 and youth is served, four games to two. Yokoyama also betters Hodges, in four straight, 9, 10, 6, and 4. So, with records of 1-1, Yokoyama and Asgarali meet head to head with the Quarterfinalist position at stake. Yokoyama has the edge after three games, 11-9, 8-11, 11-7, but like his father, Khaleel knows how to play choppers and sweeps games 4, 5, and 6. It, the Wang Chen and Khaleel Asgarali who go forward.

RR Group #4

Han Xiao, Shao Yu, Ivan Quek, Hiep Tran

None of the top seeds had encountered any difficulty in advancing, but this group contains the #4 and the #5 rated players in the event. Han plays Ivan, and 3,8,5,7, notches a win. Shao Yu steps in against Hiep Tran, and is too strong, too strong, 6,9,6,5. Hiep has to play Han next, and it, the more of the same, 5,8,5,3. You must envy Hiep, though, as the player who reached as a Qualifier, for his opportunity to play some of the nation, the best, competitively! Shao Yu keeps the group moving quickly, 5,3,6,3 against Ivan Quek. Now both 0-2, Quek and Tran play for pride, and only barely does Ivan protect his 230 point rating advantage! It, the a real barnburner, but Quek assures himself of third place, 6,-6, 5, 8,-11,-7, 12! Both assured of advancing, Shao Yu meets Han Xiao in the last match, and when Shao Yu takes game 1, 13-11, you can see this is not a walkover. 11-9 in the second, Shao Yu has a two game bulge! Han cracks back 11-5 in the third, but four and five also go to Shao Yu, 4 and 8, and he comes first, giving himself the better draw in the Quarters and placing Han Xiao against, the (OUCH!) Wang Chen.

Quarterfinals

David Zhuang vs. De Tran

De, the a worthy player, but David, the a legend, and deservedly so. 11-4, 11-6, 11-6, then 16-14, David advances to the semifinals and De collects \$125.

Han Xiao vs. Wang Chen

This is the consequence of coming second in his group; Han has to face the 2600+ Wang Chen. But this match is a shocker! An impressive display of both power and command for Han, and he leaves Wang Chen behind in the Quarterfinals, 9,7,9,5. Wang Chen accepts defeat with grace and dignity as Han impresses the hometown fans.

Shao Yu vs. Richard Lee

There, the just no chink in the armor for Richard to insert his blade. On both wings, on serve and serve return, Shao Yu shows top form, and rather quickly, 4,7,8,2, Shao Yu provides all the answers and advances.

Cheng Yinghua vs. Khaleel Asgarali

This figures to be an easy victory for Cheng. After all, multi-time Olympian, several times US Men's Singles Champion, former Chinese National Team member, Cheng has all the credentials and International success in his resume. So you can hear the sharp intake of breath from the crowd as Khaleel takes game one, 11-8! Showing great poise, and especially effective against Cheng's outstanding service game, Khaleel plays the best match I have ever seen him play, and I've seen him for years. Stung by the setback, Cheng takes game two 11-3. That's more like what should be expected from one of America's top 5 players. No quit in Khaleel, though, and he's up two games to one, 12-10! Cheng doesn't try to challenge Khaleel in straight up exchanges and begins to exert superior touch and over the table play, he controls point after point. While Khaleel is extremely fit and willing to give up a lot of sweat in court coverage, it's Cheng who controls the angles, 11-4, and 11-4. Khaleel shows heart and fight, and bows out against a legendary player, 17-15 in the sixth game. Cheng advances and Khaleel draws a shower of cheers and slaps on the back.

Semifinals

David Zhuang vs. Han Xiao

At this tournament we were treated to two of the best Semifinal matches in the history of the STIGA Tour. This pair last met on the STIGA Tour in 2004 at the STIGA Open in Delaware. Han was no match for David on that day, losing in four straight. Now, almost exactly 24 months later, the experiment would be rerun. With friends and family in attendance, Han lost the first game at 5, but dealt David an 11-6 setback in game two to signal that this was a "new day". David is pressure-tested and wins game three 11-7. Han breaks back with a deuce victory in game 4, 12-10, and the attention is riveted on this match! David wins at 9, David loses at 6, and it's all tied up, three games apiece. The shot-making has been wonderful, with Han looking for opportunities to put his mid-distance looping skills into play, David sowing confusion with World Class service and at-the-table hitting. David builds a 10-6 lead in the final game, and I think to myself that it's a shame Han must lose, he's played so well. I could have saved the sympathy. Han wins four straight points, the first two on his serve and the last two on David's! Spectacular! Deuce in the 7th of this nail biter! Both players have gone all out, David's sprawling almost-got-there attempt to return a net ball stands out in my memory. But hometown fans have joy today! After the big comeback, Han caps the 7th game, 15-13 for his victory.

Cheng Yinghua vs. Shao Yu

Shao Yu comes out of the box firing! Is it possible that Shao has picked up something from Khaleel's match? Spotted a weakness? As play continues, I look for patterns. Two nothing Shao Yu leads! 11-3, 11-5, this is downright amazing! I do see a shift. Unlike the match with Khaleel, Cheng cannot control the point, the choices and angles against Shao Yu today. Gunning straight forehands at each other also seems to play into Shao Yu's hands. He is playing tenaciously despite trailing so quickly. Cheng is not grim death however. His sense of playfulness is evident when Shao sends him scurrying from corner to corner in a long rally, but after winning the point, Cheng stops, bends over, back up, bends over, back up, and makes the "fish blowing bubbles" face that signals how taxing this is. It is a joke, of course. He may be 48, but he is as fit as you please! Cheng's service game is first rate as well, and there are lots of return errors and variations of spin for Shao to deal with. Look at this pattern, Cheng wins game three, 11-6. Cheng wins game four, 12-10. Cheng wins game five, 12-10. Shao Yu wins game six, 12-10. This is great stuff! Tied at 9 all in the fifth, but holding serve, Cheng takes the last two points to make the final. Cheng wins the match, but all I can think is "Wow! Shao Yu!" Our crowd is grinning from ear to ear at these two incredible semi final matches.

Championship Match

Cheng Yinghua vs. Han Xiao

After all that, we have half an hour for the speculation to build. This match pits master vs. student. Cheng has been Han's principal coach for over a decade. One amazing thing I see during play is that despite all the times Han has seen Cheng serve, he can still be fooled by the man's service game. I imagine there can't be any surprises between these two, and no doubt Cheng holds a psychological edge. Points are well played, but the conclusion seems pre-ordained. 11-6, 11-9, 11-9, 12-10, Cheng Yinghua is the 2006 Matthew J. Murad Memorial Open Champion!

Ronald and Gloria Murad, parents of Matthew, an MDTTC member who tragically died in an auto accident only hours after the 1999 Teams Championship, stand with our finalists. Ronald and Gloria Murad have supported this tournament for six years in memory of their son. In their home is a trophy, a large beautiful loving cup on a wooden base. On that trophy is a plaque, with the names of our previous Champions. There you will find David Zhuang's name, twice. Fan YiYong's name, twice. And there is Thomas Keinath, the wonderful German Bundesliga star. But none of this seems to mean as much as when this year's champion, former Player of the Year, former Coach of the Year, US Men's Singles Champion and US Olympian Cheng Yinghua turns to Matt's parents and says "I knew your son. He was my student. He was a good boy."

Its moments like that that justify every effort made by NATT staff, our Ref, TerriLee Bell, and the exertions of our participants. Thanks to all for their help and participation in memorializing our friend, Matthew, and to our players for a

wonderful competition. See you at the next NATT event!

2006 Matthew J. Murad Memorial Open On The 2006 Stiga North American Tour

Event Name

Champion

Finalist

Open Singles

Cheng Yinghua

Han Xiao

Ying/Lo Junior Competitions Under 22 Men's RR

Raghu Nadmichettu

Alden Fan

Ying/Lo Junior Competitions Under 18 Boys RR

Joseph Wang

Thomas An

Ying/Lo Junior Competitions Under 16 Boys RR

Kevin Lee

Charlie Sun

Ying/Lo Junior Competitions Under 16 Girls RR

Isabella Chen

Janice Lan

Ying/Lo Junior Competitions U13 Boys RR

Allen Wang

James Zhan

Ying/Lo Junior Competitions U13 Girls RR

Nina Zhen

Diana Chou

Ying/Lo Junior Competitions U10 Boys RR

Allen Wang

Erick Shahnazari

Feingold Memorial Over 40 RR

De Tran

Nazruddin Asgarali

Under 2500 SE

Paul David

Chrisopher Teille

Under 2375 RR

Nazruddin Asgarali

Kazuyuki Yokoyama

Under 2250 RR

Nazruddin Asgarli

Peter Li

Under 2125 RR

Hiep Tran

Trieu Chieu

Under 2000 RR

Charlie Sun

Julian Waters

Under 1850 RR

David Jarrin
Edmond J. Mercier

Under 1700 RR
Edmond J. Mercier
Jianqing Lan

Under 1550 RR
Raymond Chen
Paul Armentano

Under 1400 RR
Daniel Kokotov
Albert Chieu

Under 1250 RR
Gregory Mascialino
Diana Chou

Under 1100 RR
Yiheng Zhao
Nathan Hsu

Under 950 RR
Hans Hsu
John Hsu

Under 800/Unrated RR
Vikram Raja
Nathan Hsu

Open Doubles SE
Shao Yu & Paul David
Ivan Quek & Yang Liu

Under 3200 Doubles SE
Terri Lee Bell & Dominique Flexer
Albert Chieu & Trieu Chieu

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