

GOLF ROUND-UP

TABLE TENNIS

East Staffs take honours

THE East Staffordshire schools' coaching programme has been given a massive boost with Burton teams walking away from the Staffordshire schools team county championships with five of the six titles on offer.

Tower View Primary added to their local schools' title by the under-11 girls crown by beating local rivals Winhill Village in the final — a great performance by schools did not play the sport a year ago.

Jade Stevenson and Georgia Vincent were both unbeaten for Tower View as they won 6-2 in the final.

Stretton's William Shrewsbury Primary retained their under-11 boys title with a completely new team.

Will Pearson led the team with two victories but was matched by Dan Styne in his first county event as they also won their final 6-2.

Burton's de Ferrers Specialist Technology College dominated the rest of the programme with team successes including the boys and girls under-13 titles.

The boys team of Joe Byrne, Andrew Heathcote, Liam Burt and Liam Welsh were undefeated in their three games and the girls — Bekki Lycett, Grace Winfieldall, Fiona Valentine, Millie Bowering and Sophie Richardson — were winners in their very first competition.

The title trio was completed when the under-19s saw off all their opponents without losing a single game.

In only its second year, the programme has seen a huge rise in participation numbers within schools, helped by the provision of coaches for nearly half of the local primary and secondary schools in the East Staffs School Sports Partnership.

Just 55 impressive has been the rise in the ability level alongside participation, borne out by all the winners.

Claire Dawes, who co-ordinates the coaching programme through the school sports partnership, said: "It's fantastic to have so much success so quickly at this level."

"We are now involved in 11 schools compared to two when we began, and are still looking to extend provision further."

"The school sport coaching programme has enabled lots of young people to get involved in extra-curricular and community sport, and it is great to see so many young people taking part in competitions."

The winners now progress to next month's regional finals with the aim of reaching the national finals in April.

MOTORSPORT

FORMULA One teams are planning an innovative joint launch ahead of the 2010 season.

In a further effort to cut costs, the move would see all 13 teams on show in a special event in Valencia at the end of January.

In the past, teams have either held their own special launches at their factories, or revealed their cars at one of the pre-season tests.

Mercedes-Benz GP chief executive Nick Fry outlined the initiative at the Motor Sport Business Forum in Monaco.

"I don't want to go into too much detail about what the plans actually are, but we have agreed between all the teams to do a joint launch and we do wish to turn it into a proper event," said Fry.

"We are getting a lot of help from the venue and investment in communication and marketing to do that."

"I wouldn't wish to spill the beans on what we are going to do, but it is going to be hugely innovative."

"It is going to be a clear demonstration of how we are going to be working together."

"We are not all going off and doing our own individual launches, so we can do something that is a lot more customer friendly."

It is understood the new teams — Virgin Racing, US F1, Lotus and Campos — may struggle to have their cars ready by then, but they would certainly be present at the event.

Han makes a Korea move down under

KOREAN Min-Kyu Han upstaged a host of home favourites with a nine-under-par 62 in the opening round of the Australian PGA Championship at Coolumb yesterday.

So dominant was Han's performance in the morning that Australian Ryan Haller was the best of the rest on five under, while his countrymen Stuart Appleby, Matt Griffin, Scott Strange, Andrew Dodt and Henry Epstein share third place on four-under.

Adam Scott threatened to shoot a low score, particularly when he collected four birdies to the turn but a mixed run home left him alongside fellow Aussies Greg Chalmers, Stephen Dartnall and Bronson La'Cassie, Kiwi Tim Wilkinson and Shih-ching Chan of Chinese Taipei with 68.

Paul Marantz, Aaron Townsend and Jason Norris are at minus-two thanks to 69s while defending champion Geoff Ogilvy, 2006 winner Nick O'Hern, triple champion Robert Allenby and Jarrod Lyle are among those tied

for 17th on one-under.

At 25 and making just his second trip to Australia and first to play professionally, Han collected 11 birdies as he needed just 21 putts to complete his round, with only back-to-back bogeys at the 18th and the first preventing him going even lower.

Rated a 1000-1 shot coming in, Han exploded out of the blocks with birdies at his first four holes after setting off from the 10th, and further birdies at 16 and 17 took him two clear at minus-six.

He then found trouble with his only blemishes of the day to drop back into a share of the lead with Griffin but another run of five birdies in six holes, including four on the trot from the fourth, took him well clear.

"I feel like almost in heaven," Han said after his amazing round.

"It's not easy (out there), it is a very good course."

"Maybe I'm like Tiger Woods today."

Haller, who missed a Japanese Tour card for 2010 a fortnight ago by just a shot after closing with a pair of double-bogeys, recovered from a dropped shot at the first to post six birdies.

Having finally broken through for his maiden win at last weekend's Australian Open, Scott could have maintained his good run but a mixed front nine that included three bogeys prevented him finishing much closer to Han.

"I got off to a great start and just didn't keep it going," Scott said.

"Like everyone I've only played those new holes a couple of times and I ran into some problems there so I may need to rethink my strategies on them over the next couple of days and maybe not be quite as aggressive."

"I felt like I could have had a much better round but it's okay, it's a solid start and something to build on."

James dreams of joining pro ranks

BARTON golf prodigy James Bailey has set his sights on a professional career — at the ripe old age of eight.

The youngster hopes eventually to emulate the exploits of his hero Lee Westwood after winning his age group at the British Junior Golf Tour world final at the Pestana Gremacho in Portugal.

James, who attends Thomas Russell Junior School in Barton, qualified for this prestigious event after competing at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire.

The world final consisted of four 18-hole rounds, all of which James played under par, on his way to winning the nine years and under category.

His mum, Rachel, said: "James would love to play golf professionally and play against Lee before he moves on to the seniors tour."

"Meeting Lee has been the other pinnacle of James's career so far."

The pair met during the summer at the Lee Westwood Academy at Morley Hayes in Derby, where James won the nine and under category at the end of a three-day clinic which covered all aspects of the game, including knowledge and etiquette.

James began playing at Branston Golf and Country Club and quickly progressed through the bronze, silver and gold stages of the Academy.

He played in his first competitive golf in the summer of 2007 in the HSBC Wee Wonders Championship.

Having developed a taste for the sport, James then joined the British Junior Golf Tour and competed at many events throughout the UK, winning of finishing runner-up in the majority of competi-



BOY WONDER ... James Bailey pictured with his golfing hero Lee Westwood

tions he entered.

He was runner-up in the order merit on the 2008 summer tour and qualified for the British Junior Golf Tour UK Final at Celtic Manor, the home of the next Ryder Cup.

James obtained his first handicap at the age of six, starting off at 56 which he has now halved as well as playing off the championship white tees at Branston rather than the women's and academy tees.

James is the youngest 18-hole member at Branston and this year picked up the 'most improved golfer' and 'outstanding achievement' awards at the club. sfgshgh WORLD number four Lee Westwood has agreed to become an

ambassador for the Golf Foundation charity.

The Ryder Cup star, who already has his own academy, has chosen to support Golf Roots, the national project which aims to develop playing and personal skills amongst all young people.

For the last eight years Westwood has endorsed the Foundation's "Charity Challenge", a fund-raising initiative, and he was presented with the organisation's "Spirit of Golf" award at The Open in July.

Mike Round, chief executive of the Golf Foundation, said: "Lee Westwood has been a great inspiration to many young golfers and we are all delighted that he has agreed to become a Golf Roots

ambassador.

"Through his links with our charity and the clear enthusiasm he shows for junior golf, Lee has also inspired the whole team behind the Golf Roots project, which is a highly important one for the future of the game."

"Golf Roots introduces golf skills and the game's 'skills for life' to youngsters from all backgrounds and abilities, in schools and golf clubs and through special initiatives in city areas."

Westwood stated: "The Golf Foundation has helped thousands of youngsters, me included, over the years and I am delighted that they consider me worthy of carrying the title and their good name forward."