

As mentioned in the Men's F report, the scene at Hume Park 2 was that of a carnival with 3 teams out of the 4 present, from UCSC.

With a great track record in the Men's C to protect, perennial team captain, Kelvin Kan, a master of facade, made yet another perfect team selection for the UCSC 'C'onquerors against unquestionably title-contenders, New Pioneers.

The teams' respective No. 3's were first up in court. Untested English veteran and sportsperson extraordinaire, David Price (DP), squared up against last year's 'D Grade Individual Runner-up, Woody Tham (WT). DP, an even better golfer and cricketer than squasher, made light of his age handicap against the skilful WT. Demonstrated supreme match control, DP surprised WT with an easy 11-5 win in the opener. To top that, DP then blitzed the woozy Woody with a perfect 11-0 stunner. WT settled down in the 3rd and tucked away some delightful winners when DP suddenly playing some uncharacteristically loose shots. Just as it looked as though the fight-back was on for WT, the vastly experienced sports gladiator, DP, regained control in the 4th and what proved to be the final set as the two excellent squashers fought point for point till mid-way through the 4th when DP wrapped up proceedings with a comprehensive 11-6 for an overall 3-1 scoreline. All hail, King David and first blood to the 'C'onquerors!

Next on court were the teams' No. 4's which featured two players right at the other end of the evening's age spectrum. 'C'onqueress (?), Jerryca Teo (JT), traded books (which she was studying when outside of the court) for a racket as she stepped into court to face young student, Brandon Leong. The first set was a close affair which Brandon snuck home at 11-9 with some unusual but deadly, trickle boasts and audacious drop-shots from the back of the court which repeatedly caught JT by surprise. The 2nd set was a near mirror of the first's close fight but which favored JT this time for the match to be tied thus far at 1-1. JT began to settle down and played with more composure and despite having to do more of the retrieving from Brandon's powerful deep drives, was rewarded for her persistence with a 11-5 win to lead 2-1 overall. The 4th set saw long rallies galore with shots sent into every corner of the court by both tired but determined youngsters. Brandon edge home 11-8 to take the match into a 'rubber'. Despite the obvious fatigue shown by both players, long rallies continued to feature but increasingly, JT's amazing fighting qualities saw BL panting and resting his hands on his knees after most rallies. BL's trademark drop-shots from the back also faded away, in favor of higher percentage squash. It was so close but JT managed to find the extra reserves to edge home by 11-7 in the rubber and a deserving overall energy-sapping 3-2 winner.

## NSL 2011 Men's C - 'C'onquerors set the tone - United Condo Squash Club, Singapore

Written by Kelvin KAN

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Next on and having been patiently waiting, was the reliable and seasoned "Uncle" Bobby Pang (BP). Having been "benched" by his offsprings last season, BP was determined to make up for his long competitive absence as he went in to face an ex-UCSCsian in Alex Ng (AN), now a medical undergrad at NUS. BP managed to keep pace with a vastly-improved AN's power, pace and hard drives, matching these with his typical controlled and patient game to edge home a 11-7 winner in the 1st set. AN returned for the 2nd set full of fire. BP appeared to have successfully doused AN's fire with his own 'cool' but leading at 9-7 and unable to close out the set, BP allowed AN to push the set to deuce and with engine pistons continuing to pump at max capacity, AN deservingly took that one by 12-10. However, AN's all-out effort in that 2nd must have depleted his reserves as BP's consistency and calm focus saw his delicate cross-court drops and touches race home with the match with 11-2 and 11-3 scorelines in the 3rd and 4th.

With the 'C'onquerors having sealed victory at 3-0, everyone got set to enjoy the much-awaited #1 tie between the fast-rising star, Ben Chan (BC) against the more than competent and experienced, Showbhik Kalra (SK). It was 'even-stevens' in the 1st set, peppered with rallies as both players sized up each other. It was the younger BC who drew first blood with deadly straight deep drives, interspersed with sudden boasts to take Set #1 by 11-7. Having gotten familiar with SK's play, BC played superbly in the 2nd set, demonstrating outstanding court coverage and tight returns to also take #2 by 11-5. BC appeared in control in Set #3 and took some chances with riskier shots which the experienced SK punished to lead 10-8 before BC fought back to force deuce but still, it was SK who deservingly edged home 12-10 to force a 4th set. Even at this stage of the contest, both players exhibited disciplined cautious play, giving nothing away to each other. But it was BC's superior court coverage and sharp strokes which won the 4th and final set 11-6 and reward UCSC with a fully appreciated 4-0 win over a highly respected opponent in New Pioneers.

It was a match played in the best sporting spirit and everyone truly enjoyed themselves in the carnival atmosphere, the way squash should be enjoyed. Well done, 'C'onquerors ... Both on and off the court.

UCSC Lives & Breathes Squash!

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