

# LocalSPORTS

## Exciting action at NOTL Tennis Club finals

### Mike Balsom The Local

It took some close, exciting, skillfully played matches Saturday afternoon before the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club could crown its 2023 singles champions.

Fellow club members, friends and family gathered on the Memorial Park bleachers to watch Mohsin Kamran, Sean Hilliker and Fran Doran capture their respective titles.

The morning began with the semi-finals. In the Women's division, Doran edged Karen Rhind 8-6 and Ann Davies downed Natalie Early by the same score to advance to the final.

Things were close between Doran and Davies, who lost to Milla Matsko in last year's Women's A division final. Davies placed second again this year, as Doran prevailed 6-4, 7-5 to

win the championship.

"It was a fantastic game," Davies told The Local after the match. "It's always a pleasure to play with Fran because she is such a lovely player. She had excellent placement and she's really skillful."

"She challenged me with a lot of high balls," Doran said of Davies. "The girls know I like to hit a lot of low balls. She kept me running, she returned everything I hit to her. That's how the game is supposed to be played."

In the Men's B division, last year's champ Harry Schlange beat Scott McGregor 8-4 in the morning to punch his ticket to the afternoon final, where he faced Sean Hilliker, a teacher at Westlane Secondary School in Niagara Falls, who ousted Glenn Barr 8-2 in the semi-final.

The pair played a marathon two-hour-plus match, including a lengthy tie-breaker. In the end, Hill-

liker thwarted Schlange's attempt at a repeat win, beating him 6-4, 5-7, 10-8. When it was over, Schlange, whose loud groans and choice words might have been heard across the common where the Scout camp had been set up, seemed almost relieved to step off the court.

In the Men's A division semi-finals, Gerry McIlhorne fought through Ken McGillivray's strong serves and well-placed groundstrokes to win 8-2. The other semi was a hotly contested match between Rob Lipovsky and Mohsin Kamran. Kamran came out on top 8-6 after he adjusted to Lipovsky's repeated attempts to force him to his backhand.

McIlhorne, whose match against McGillivray concluded while the other semi-final was still going, had a chance to watch Kamran and clearly used the

same strategy as Lipovsky in the final that afternoon.

It worked in the early stages of the match, as McIlhorne took an early lead in the first set. But Kamran used the same strategy, forcing McIlhorne to his backhand and tying it up 4-4 after eight games.

It see-sawed from that point, with McIlhorne going up 6-5, Kamran tying it, then McIlhorne going up again 6-5 with a chance to capture the first set. But Mohsin broke McIlhorne's serve in the 12th game, forcing the tiebreaker.

Again, McIlhorne started strong, going up 4-1, but Kamran, a fairly new club member who works for Farm Credit Canada, fought back repeatedly before taking the tiebreaker 11-9 to win the first set.

From there, it seemed that McIlhorne had left it all on the court in set one, as the

34-year-old Kamran used his quickness and power to take the second set 6-0 to capture the championship.

"It was a terrific match," McIlhorne said. "The difference between the first and second set, though, was energy. He really raised his game. He hit the ball harder, he hit it for power. He served better, he hit groundstrokes better. He came up with some great shots and made some great points."

"The first set was really tough, it was anybody's game," Kamran said. "He really made me cover a lot of the court. I felt like his pace came down a bit in the second set. It gave me a little bit of leeway. I felt he lost a bit of power by then. Gerry is a fantastic player."

On the consolation side, Mike Symanski and Bill Devolin took the Men's A and B matches respectively, while Natalie Early was the Women's consolation winner.

It was perfect tennis weather with blue skies and low humidity," said club vice president Hugh Dow. "It made for an exciting day for this year's Singles Tennis Tournament"

### Summary:

#### Mens "A" Singles

Champion — Mohsin Kamran beat Gerry McIlhorne 7-6(10), 6-0

Consolation — Mike Symanski beat Victor Zilinskas 6-2, 6-1

#### Mens "B" Singles

Champion — Sean Hilliker beat Harry Schlange 6-4, 5-7, 10-8

Consolation — Bill Devolin beat Alec Papadimitriou 6-2, 6-3

#### Ladies Singles

Champion — Fran Doran beat Ann Davies 6-4, 7-5.

Consolation — Natalie Early beat Karen Rhind 7-5, 1-6, 10-8.



Mike Symanski and Viktor Zilinskas, Mens A Consolation final. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Mohsin Kamran in action in the Mens A final match.



Natalie Early and Karen Rhind, Women's Consolation final.



Fran Doran in action in the Women's final.



Ann Davies in action in the Women's final.