

Burnham Championships 2025 – Preview

Its that time of year again, when league form goes out the window, and we all don our best outfits (Rod MacLennan and Sam Lowman being exempt from sartorial elegance) for the Annual Burnham Championships. A multitude of events to choose from, and hopefully a multitude of Finalists to emerge from the quagmire of defeat and despair. Onwards and Upwards I hear you cry!

Junior Events

A limited entry pool for these categories – in the Singles round robin I expect the vastly improved Peter Harverson to come through shaken but not stirred. Peter is now a mainstay of the Woodham Division 2 outfit and is regularly hitting hat-tricks against a variety of styles. His resilience should be too much for his opponents. Watch out for a good showing from Arthur Shadforth and Oscar Wyman. The Junior Doubles is a straightforward Final – with Peter Harverson and Oscar Wyman, favourites against Arthur Shadforth and Matt Copsey.

Prediction – Double Bubble for Mr Harverson

Divisional Events

Fambridge Trophy (Div 3)

A few contenders in this space but the stand-out is Allan Steel. Steel has beaten all-comers in the league campaign and remains on 100% win rate. His biggest threat would be the recent octogenarian Merv 'The Swerv' Perriman who can upset anyone on his day. Could be a good one this – with the finalists sure to come from the top 4 seeds.

Prediction – Solid as a Steel rod, for a Fambridge and Roy Davis Double

Dan Richardson Trophy (Div 2)

With 22 entrants for this one plenty of upsets will follow. Neil Want is the top ranked player and No 1 seed, but this pressure doesn't fall well on those muscular shoulders. Such a variety of styles across the top 7 seeds I suspect many will fall early doors. So much so that the Richardson back gate will be left open for a sneaky non-seeded player to rise up and defeat the lot of you. Of the seeded players I expect good showings from Colin Napper and Peter Chastin, but the much less ranked Peter Harverson is the in-form player and he may well take out a few of the seeds on his journey to the final.

Prediction – Seeding Committee to be sacked in the morning – Peter Harverson glory, with Colin Napper in the Final if they don't meet along the journey. Odds of 45-1 for that final!!

Mixed Open Singles (everyone bar the top Singles seeds)

This is a drawn event so can provide some early round high profile casualties which makes predictions difficult. Also a huge entry of 39 competitors for this one. Obvious candidates would be Eric Green, Sam Lowman and the Travelling Wilbury that is Lee McHugh – and yes they all have a great shout. But also watch out for the sensational Sanjay Saptarshi, Dan Patynski and George Reeves to be in contention. My two wildcards are the two really in form players on the circuit at the moment – Peter Harverson could have a phenomenal weekend and take home more trophies than Spurs have ever had, and I suspect he will cause some apple cart damage in this one. However, my main each-way bet is for the force that is Arron Chandler – not sure he will win it overall but I'm putting a pony on him to make the final!

Prediction – Arron Chandler to make the Final

Age Restricted Events

Veterans Singles (Over 40s)

Always a great event with the Final usually played on Finals Night, allowing those creaky bones to have a few days rest. There is some pool of talent in this one and you can take your pick of whom you think will prevail. The seeded Final would be Duncan Taylor versus Keith Adams – and its hard to argue with the seedings committee on this one – although it is an event that Kevin Read usually does very well in – plus it allows him to prevent Duncan from winning everything!! So I'm plumping for a Taylor – Read Final, with Kevin to outsmart his mate for some bragging rights glory.

Prediction – Read all about it!

Veterans Doubles (Over 40s)

Providing they have made up after Kevin Read's Vets Singles destruction of Duncan then I can see the pair of them making the final of this one, and their likely opponents would be Gary Young and Keith Adams – That's the Seeding Committee's Final. The only pairing that might have a say in proceedings would be Eric Green and Simon Jacob – now that's a difficult wall to breach!

Prediction – the Ol' Duncan & Kevin Rodeo is back in town

Over 60s Singles

John Poysden, Eric Green and whippersnapper Sanjay Saptarshi are the top seeds in this one. John will be keen to retain his trophy and will be at his sartorial peak during this event with a change of outfit every other game. The trouble with these 3 is they have such differing styles and there is a round robin of who beats who. Based on recent form though I see Eric triumphing in this one providing he has the energy left to compete – which he usually does.

Prediction – Green is the Colour

Over 70s Singles – The Zimmer Frame Cup

A good line up this year and a fair few dodgy bats to deal with. Kath Little is the only Lady brave enough to compete with these old codgers, and many have questioned her eligibility given her graceful elegance and youthful looks – but birth certificates have been checked and verified, so she's in! Hamish Innes and Dick Wyman are the top seeds – but come the end of a long day watch out for the tireless duo of Alan Scammell and Terry Hyland to potentially sneak in. Personally I would love to see Mervyn Perriman do well now that he has entered his ninth decade – what a way to celebrate.

Prediction – Heart says Merv the Swerve, Head says Dick to conquer all – sorry Kath!

Random Events

Handicap Singles

This is a bloody lottery and there's always some kid whose completely incorrectly handicapped with all the energy in the world for the long matches... However, 48 contestants for this bonanza – some high profile names like Sam Lowman and Ian Wall will need their patient pants on to progress through the multiple rounds. But watch out for the middle grounders – perhaps someone like the inform Ross Kirby could go all the way, or the long reaching leftie Harry Sawford could be a bit too awkward for most. For me I think this is the one that Dan Anderson could win – plenty of grit and a style that anyone below div 1 can not cope with.

Prediction – Dan the Man

Hardbat Singles

Despite the variety of bats, conditions and rules it seems that the seeds remain the same. So again we look towards the top seeds for this event – with Eric Green the man with the hardbat form in his locker. So who will challenge the mighty Eric – the usual suspects of Ian Wall, Lee McHugh and Arron Chandler stand out of course. Similarly we could look at the pimple poppers and dead bat specialists in Kim Shead, Ken Sheard or even the Handicap Winner Dan Anderson. I don't think anyone in this field gets past Eric.

Prediction – Another Trophy for the Green Room

Main Open Events

Ladies Singles

The two stand out competitors are Sue Body and Dawn Baldry and they should make it through to the Final. Watch out for some resistance from the stoic Jean Chasmer – tough to beat for sure.

Prediction – A new Dawn is upon us

Ladies Doubles

In this round robin format it is difficult to see beyond the Maldon duo of Shirley Carroll and Dawn Baldry, with Jean Casmer and Tina Hutchinson pushing them hard. Shirley first won this particular trophy 50 Years ago – wouldn't it be perfect symmetry.

Prediction – Well Shirley has been winning these Doubles titles since 1975 so no point stopping now.

Mixed Doubles

It would be great to see a mother and son combo win this one – and Peter Chastin and Jean Chasmer are in with a shout for the semi-finals for sure. Whether they could then get past one of the seeds is a different kettle of jellyfish. Top seeds Duncan Taylor and his new partner Sue Body look to have the right pedigree but let's see how they gel on the day. Hunting them down will be the rocking combos of Keith Adams & Shirley Carroll, and Lee McHugh with Tina Hutchinson

Prediction – Duncan can add this to his Body of work.

Men's Doubles

A premeditated battle of youth versus experience. On the OAP side we have the 4 times champions Duncan Taylor & Kevin Read, and the 2019 champions Gary Young and Keith Adams. Whilst representing the youth and vitality of our league we have current holders Reece Seddon and Liam Squirrell, plus the Woodham pairing of Harry Chivers and Lee McHugh. This event has yo-yoed betwixt the young and old over recent years and this year we are due an experienced winner. Kevin and Duncan have fallen to younger opponents this year so we need to look towards a Young Keith for our heroes.

Prediction – One for the not so Young.

Mens Singles

We have 37 entries and 28 of them are regular Division 1 players. Holder Reece Seddon is the top seed and he is superb at tournament ping pong. So by my reckoning it is going to take something special to knock him off his perch. Perhaps his sporting frenemy Liam Squirrell can do just this – playing limited League matches as of late it will be hard to know what level he brings to the table – but it could be immense. Outside of the top 8 seeds look out for upsets from the speedy Sam Lowman, the youthful Harry Chivers, the attacking Eric Green and the form merchant Arron Chandler.

Prediction – A Seddon v Squirrell Final, with the rodents coming out on top.