
Commonwealth Youth Games

The Commonwealth Games is an event held every four years in which Wales competes as a nation rather than as part of Great Britain. Tennis does not always feature as a sport in the Games but when it does Wales are able to send a team to compete as it did in Delhi in 2010 with Josh Milton and Chris Lewis competing.

There is a junior version of the Games which takes place every three to four years and Wales has sent a team to compete in both the 2015 Games in Samoa and the 2017 Games in The Bahamas. Tennis has contributed very well to the overall medals table for Wales winning multiple medals in both Samoa and The Bahamas.

The event is an incredible experience for those players selected as the tennis team travel as part of Team Wales which is made up of multiple other sports and support staff. The next Games is being planned for 2021 but both the host nation and the sports included are yet to be confirmed.

What follows is the report from the most recent Games in The Bahamas in 2017...

The sixth edition of the Commonwealth Junior Games was hosted by the Bahamas and included teams from 64 countries and over 1000 athletes. Tennis was one of the sports in which athletes were able to compete for medals, in the disciplines of boys singles, girls singles and mixed doubles.

James Story and Morgan Cross were selected to represent Wales a few months prior to the event and would exceed expectations by winning 3 medals between them. Both players were seeded 5th in singles courtesy of their ITF Junior rankings and as a pair they were seeded 4th in the mixed doubles.



James won his first match against Jayasundara Mudiyan (Sri Lanka) 60 64 in the last 16 and followed that up with a 76 63 win against the second seed in the Quarter Finals, Siphosothando Montsi (RSA) who was ranked at 110 in the world juniors. In the Semi Final James played some of his best tennis in beating the 4th seed Eleftherios Neos (CYP) 6-2 6-2 to guarantee himself a medal. In the Gold Medal match, James would play Hamish Stewart (SCO) and lose out 46 46. He started the match very well but Hamish stayed in touch on the score board and edged the first set. From there on James was second best and unable to get back into the match despite his best efforts.

Morgan also started in the round of the last 16 and played Mwayi Kaddamanja (Malawi). A ruthless and confident performance got her off to the perfect start winning 60 60. In the Quarter Final she too would face the 2nd seed from South Africa and in the closest match of the tournament Morgan lost 63 26 67(6) in nearly 3 hours of tennis in high heat and humidity. Playing a girl ranked around 200 places higher meant that Morgan went into the match as the underdog but she gave herself every chance to win with an excellent performance.

Morgan and James formed a superb partnership in the mixed doubles and there is no doubt that they were the team with the best energy and togetherness in the event. After beating pairs from the Bahamas and England in straight sets they would meet the top seeded Indian pair in the Semi Final. With a combined ITF Junior ranking of just under 100, India had highest ranked boy and girl in the event and would take some stopping. James and Morgan were giving away around 900 places in the rankings and a year or two in age but the match was as close as they come. The Indian pair won the match 76(6) 76(5) with their additional experience seeing them through at the end of both sets.

A retirement from South Africa ahead of the Bronze Medal match meant that Wales were awarded the bronze medal which they thoroughly deserved. India went on to win Gold very comfortably in the final.

I cannot stress enough how well James and Morgan performed at this event. To travel half way around the world to a different climate and time zone in such a high profile event and play the way they did was hugely impressive. Perhaps even more importantly they showed passion, pride, togetherness and belief and in that way demonstrated the values asked of them and the rest of Team Wales. There is no doubt that they will have enhanced the reputation of Welsh tennis amongst the other sports in Wales and across the Commonwealth countries who were at the Games.

