



County Championships: Lancs lead way

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Lancashire were the surprise packet in the first round of matches in this seasons Over 60 County Championship Premier Division played at Milton Keynes TTC recently.

Lancs were the only county who won all their three matches with wins over Sussex, Hertfordshire and on Sunday morning they took their prize scalp of White Rose Rivals Yorkshire with a hard fought 6-4 victory.

Reigning champions Cheshire are handily placed just one point adrift of their near neighbours as they dropped their only point in a thrilling draw against Essex, who themselves having drawn two matches are on four points and are joined by Yorkshire who recorded two wins and are also on four points.

Round One

The first round of matches saw 7-3 wins by Cheshire over Hampshire, Yorkshire over Hertfordshire and Essex against Oxfordshire. The only matter of note was a narrow 6-4 victory by Lancashire over Sussex and the south coast team could be kicking themselves as they were a player short with Barrie Gilbert being fog-bound at Guernsey thus giving Lancashire a three-set start.

Round Two

Lancashire recorded what looked like the easiest victory of the round with a 7-3 win over Hertfordshire although even in this match Barry Elliott just beat Gary Keers 3-2 (7-11, 13-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-8) and a hard-fought men's doubles saw Elliott & Keith Williams just beat Stuart Seaholme & Keers in five (9-11, 8-11, 11-5, 11-2, 11-9) as Lancashire maintained their unbeaten start.

Once again short-handed Sussex lost by the narrowest of margins as Hampshire opened their account with a 6-4 win as did Yorkshire who were made to fight really hard and required a last-set mixed doubles win by Linda Simpson & Steve Kosmowsky over Janet Brown & Chris Lansley (11-5, 12-10, 11-7) to record the win.

The match of the round as a drawn clash between Cheshire and Essex as five of the 10 sets went to five games

as Essex came from 5-3 down to snatch a draw, the pick of which was the penultimate set between the two No 1s as Alex Abbot just beat Brian Johns 3-2 (11-5, 11-5, 4-11, 4-11, 13-11) which brought the sides to within a set and Essex earned their share of the spoils as Gill Lock & Peter Radford just beat Jan Johns & Paul Collins in three tight games (12-10, 11-9, 11-9).

Round Three

The final round of matches saw 7-3 wins by Hertfordshire over Hampshire and Cheshire over Oxfordshire but the two other matches were the ones which caught the eye as Essex and Sussex drew and Lancashire beat Yorkshire.

In the Essex/Sussex match there was never more than a set between the teams as Sussex, now restored to fielding a full team, took a last-set mixed doubles win as Shiela King & Barrie Gilbert beat Gill Locke & Peter Radford 3-1 (11-2, 7-11, 12-10, 11-9) to earn a draw and pick up their first point.

The final match on Sunday was a Roses clash between Lancashire and Yorkshire which went the way of Lancashire, who completed victory in the penultimate set when Keith Williams beat Phil Cawser in four, and although Yorkshire made the score look respectable by taking the final mixed doubles as Simpson & Kosmowsky beat Clements & Julie Restall, it was the red rose county who won this battle.

The next round of fixtures takes place once more at Milton Keynes in March when all counties have a further four matches to play and with most of the leading counties still to play each other there is still likely to be plenty of twists and turns to go in this division.

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