

Two great wins for Abbie Milwain

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The three leading contenders for the Senior County Championships Premier Division honours all won in the round four matches played at Wood Green High School, Birmingham this weekend.

Derbyshire, the leaders on games difference did well to beat a strong Cleveland side 7-3, no mean performance this – as Cleveland included England's top player Paul Drinkhall in their line-up. It almost doesn't need saying that Paul remained undefeated. It was a great game for Derbyshire who came good in no less than five successive five enders and there were some stirring victories to boot. Emma Vickers had to pull out all the stops to get the better of Chloe White 11-8, 10-12, 8-11, 11-7, 12-10 and Shaun Marples levelled the scores at 2-2 by beating Bryn Drinkhall 11-9, 6-11, 8-11, 11-8, 11-8. England no. nine Junior Abbie Milwain scored an excellent 11-7, 9-11, 11-4, 5-11, 11-5 win over England no. 14 lady Karen Shepherd and with Derby very much on a roll Sam Perry defeated Andrew Wilson 12-10, 9-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-6. Abbie Milwain completed what for her was a very good match by beating Chloe White 12-10, 4-11, 11-8, 8-11, 11-8.

Middlesex, second after the first weekend made it four wins out of four as well. They edged out bottom side Essex 6-4, after a marathon match which finished half an hour after the third match to be completed. Middlesex's young stars Tin-Tin Ho and Igor Morais both stayed undefeated. Tin-Tin held her nerve well to beat Sara Wang 11-8, 10-12, 11-3, 17-19, 11-5 whilst Igor gave an excellent account of himself. He beat both Clive Carthy (3-1) and Ewan Liddle (3-1). England no. 27 Emran Hussain was the best of the Essex players. He beat both Daniel Basterfield and Neil Charles in five ends, and he fought back from 10-7 down in a nerve-tingling fifth end to defeat Neil 8-11, 11-5, 11-9, 5-11, 12-10.

Sussex, with a more "mature" side than some of their rivals are still contenders and Craig Bryant, Ritchie Venner, Da Shuai Zhang (their younger representative on this occasion) and Rosemary Rainton were all undefeated as they beat Devon 8-2. England no. 28 lady Rosemary did well to defeat Lisa Radford 14-12, 11-9, 18-16 and the higher ranked Vicky Smith (England no. 19 lady) 11-7, 12-10, 4-11, 11-6.

Berkshire took another step towards Premier division survival by beating Yorkshire 6-4. Hari Gehlot was Berkshire's hero. He won his first game against Roman Doryn 11-6, 12-10, 11-5 and in a thrilling finale he defeated Richard Lightowler 14-12, 14-12 6-11, 11-13, 13-11 to secure his side's victory. In a match where the ETTA Ranking List took a bashing Roman Doryn proved very adept against defence and he hit some absolute screamers as he defeated David Barr 11-8, 11-5, 4-11 13-11 whilst Barr defeated the higher ranked Simon Noutch (the England no. 31) 11-4, 11-9, 11-8. England no. 23 Veteran Richard Lightowler excelled by getting the better of England no. 12 Senior Richard Andrews 11-9, 12-14, 13-11, 13-11.

In the neighbouring hall in the Junior Premier Division the all-conquering Sussex Junior first team made it four 10-0 wins on the trot. Da Shuai Zhang, Helshan Weerasinghe, Mark Scutts, Yolanda King and Lois Peake totally outplayed a game Hertfordshire team and it was only the first and last games that weren't decided 3-0. In the first game Helshan required four ends to get the better of Bradley Tuttle 11-7, 7-11, 11-9, 11-6 and in the last game Luke Walsh fully extended Mark Scutts before Mark eased home 8-11, 12-10, 8-11, 11-8, 11-5.

Second-placed Essex scored a workmanlike 8-2 win over Kent. Jared Patel, Luca Mariano and Evangeline Collier were all unbeaten for Essex. Kent rallied briefly in games six and seven with Luke Savill getting the better of Alex Holland 6-11, 11-5, 11-8, 11-7 and Emma Tovey seeing off Ifunanya Okafor 5-11, 11-9, 11-9, 8-11, 11-6 but that was as far as the Kent recovery went. Essex did not drop another game.

Yorkshire with no points from the first weekend did well to draw with fourth-placed Cleveland, whom were hampered with Chloe Whyte having to concede her games due to her Senior side's games taking greater priority. Cleveland's England no. two Junior Karina Lefevre won her two games comfortably beating Jenny Wood (11-2, 11-6, 11-4) and Nicole Finn (11-5, 11-4, 11-2) whilst England no. 23 Junior Reece Lo scored two

excellent wins for Yorkshire. He beat Anthony Phoenix 11-6, 11-8, 9-11, 15-13 and Paul Smith 11-6, 6-11, 11-6, 8-11, 11-8.

Middlesex raced into a 5-1 lead against Hampshire and although Hampshire rallied Middlesex took both points as they won 6-4. Middlesex won two vital games on the trot. Ryan Maynard beat Jonathan Evans 11-8, 11-13, 14-12, 5-11, 11-9 and Sushmita Limbu defeated Letitia McMullan 8-11, 12-14, 11-8, 11-4, 11-9. With his team 5-4 ahead Ryan Maynard had the task of beating Jimmy Yeung to secure the second point for his side. Ryan came through with a very strong display to win 11-1, 11-8, 11-4.

Steve Kerns

Photo: Shaun Marples – good win over Bryn Drinkhall for Derbyshire

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