

Essex Over 60's Premier Champs

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This seasons over 60's county championships premier division was completed at the newly created Keighley Table Tennis Centre over the first weekend in April as all 7 counties met up at the well received Yorkshire venue to play out the remaining fixtures in the inaugural premier division.

The first round of matches saw Berkshire defeat Sussex 6-4 and Yorkshire account for Cambridgeshire without the loss of a set but the match of the round saw Kent and Lancashire fight out a thrilling draw.

Top two Lancashire players Brian Clements and Barry Crook each picked up two wins and joined together to take a mens doubles win to record their five sets and although the Kent team packed in with all but the out of touch Tom Adams chipping in with a least one victory, this draw put a dent in Kent's title aspirations.

The second round of matches saw Lancashire beat the luckless Cambridgeshire 7-3 but the other two matches in the round produced thrillers and had a great bearing out the destination of the title.

Sussex, playing their final match before the long journey home were involved in a thrilling draw with Kent which saw Andy Meads of Essex and Kents' Keith Clark both unbeaten in singles play but it was the scrapping qualities of Kent which salvaged their draw as they took the two tight sets in the match.

Keith Clark took the battle of the players with a similar name as he just edged out Johnny Clarke 4-11 5-11 11-6 11-3 11-9 which was followed by a mixed doubles win by Tom Adams and Pam Butcher over Bruce Albion and Pauline Steele 11-6 8-11 11-4 8-11 11-9.

But with two draws in the day time would only tell what damage had been done to Kent's title hopes.

Essex had the luxury of the morning bye and travelled up from the south during the morning and were due to face a Yorkshire side who had walloped Cambridgeshire in the morning match and as possibly expected a thrilling match ensued.

Essex started the better and lead 2-nil but after four sets the sides were tied and after that there was never more than a set between the team and it took a last set mixed doubles win by Dave Bowles and Shirley Carroll over Doug Bartle and Linda Simpson 11-9 11-7 11-5 which gave Essex a vital draw which would prove crucial.

Bowles lead the way for Essex but star of the match was Steve Kosmowsky of Yorkshire who picked up two singles wins and partnered Richard Priestley and Linda Simpson to doubles wins to help his counties cause.

The first day ended with Essex, Kent and Sussex all on seven points but Sussex were now on their way home having completed all their matches so looked to be out of the equation as both Kent and Essex had matches to play. Kent were due to face Cambridgeshire while Essex were scheduled to play Lancashire and whilst Essex had a slightly superior sets average, they only lead by three sets and had what looked like an easier last match so the destination of the title was still in the balance.

With Cambridgeshire having only won four sets the whole campaign, Kent would have been looking for a whitewash to put pressure on Essex and hope that Lancashire could win at least four sets in order for Kent to take the title on sets.

As the morning progressed Kent were as expected picking up the sets against Cambridgeshire in quick succession and with Essex dropping the odd set , things began to look tight and with trophies to winners and runners up to present there was a chance that if things turned out like they were heading, a definitive result may not be reach on the day.

Frantic phone calls to the county championships administrator finally established what the position in games were at the end of the first weekend at Ashford, so in the event of a tie on match points and sets, a winner would

be established.

At the end of the last round of matches Kent beat Cambridgeshire 10-nil and Essex beat Lancashire 7-3 leaving both counties' level on nine match points and an identical sets record of 41-19 but on count back of games it was Essex who came out on top 144-86 with Kent's 137-86.

Barry Snowden

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