

Strong start for Notts' Vets in County Champs

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Nottinghamshire Veterans produced a strong performance over the first weekend of the County Championship Veterans Division 2a as they reeled off four straight wins to lead the division after the fixtures played at Draycott and Long Eaton TTC.

Notts hit the ground running and started with a 10- nil demolition of South Yorkshire as Michael George, Trevor Kerry, Tim Sheppard and Debbie Inkley all were unbeaten with only three of the matches going to a deciding game and only three more requiring a fourth game. This proved a wake up call for South Yorkshire who were playing their first match in this division after last seasons' promotion effort.

Lee Neil replaced Sheppard for Notts in their second match and went straight into number one with George and Kerry dropping down a place for their clash with Bedfordshire and despite defeats by John Alsop over Kerry (3-2) 11-9, 5-11, 11-6, 8-11, 11-8 and Sandra Harper over Inkley (3-0) 11-9, 11-4, 11-1 these were the only sets dropped by Notts as they ran out 8-2 victors after the first day's play.

Sunday saw a morning clash with Essex who made Notts fight all the way before the midlanders finally edged home by the narrowest of margins.

Notts started brightly enough by taking the first two sets as Neil and Kerry both won but an (3-2) 11-4, 15-13, 3-11, 8-11, 12-10 victory by Alex Abbott over George saw Essex pull a set back and halve the Notts lead. Despite Notts taking the next mixed doubles set, Essex once again hit back and traded sets right up to the seventh set when Kerry and Neil beat Abbott and Paul Cuming (3-0) 12-10, 11-6, 12-10 in the mens doubles to establish a 4-3 lead.

The following set saw George guarantee Notts at least a share of the spoils as he beat Cuming from behind in a thrilling five gamer (3-2) 13-15, 6-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-8 which gave Notts a 5-3 lead and it was Neil who converted this into victory as he also came from behind to beat Abbott (3-2) 9-11, 6-11, 11-5, 11-8, 11-8 as Notts now lead 6-3.

The final mixed doubles was academic as Elaine Sayer and John Monk pulled a set back for Essex with an (3-1) 11-7, 11-7, 8-11, 13-11 mixed doubles victory over Inkley and George but Notts had already sealed their third win of the campaign.

Nottinghamshire completed the weekend as they had started with a 10-nil win against Northumberland who were hampered by an injury to Karen Henry who had to retire from the weekend due to an injury picked up whilst playing against Cheshire on the previous day.

Notts will start the second weekend in January as favourites but they still have to face Cambridgeshire who are currently lying in second place and a good result by Cambridgeshire when the sides meet could open up the division into a thrilling contest.

Barry Snowden

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