

Cleveland head for Veterans Premier

Author: Paul Stimpson

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CLEVELAND HEAD FOR VETERANS PREMIER

After dropping just one point during the first weekend of the County Championship Division 1a fixtures it was Cleveland who held their nerve to win their remaining four matches when the division was completed at Milton Keynes recently.

Having drawn with Herefordshire and recorded 6-4 victories over the powerful Lincolnshire and Yorkshire seconds over the first weekend at Woodfield, Wolverhampton, Cleveland were always going to be the team to beat.

First up Saturday for Cleveland were the solid-looking Northants, and if any team other than the team from the north east were going to win the division everyone was looking to Northants to do some damage to their opponents title ambitions.

A confident Cleveland were not going to allow all their earlier hard work go to waste and quickly established a 3-0 lead with Lindsay Taylor, Tony Wilson and Mark Simon all recording singles wins.

Northants hit back by taking the next two ends as firstly Steve Silk and Clem Little took a hard fought five-game doubles win over Wilson and Jane Durham 3-2 (11-9, 11-8, 9-11, 7-11, 11-6), which was followed by a singles win by Fuller over Simon 3-1 (11-3, 6-11, 11-9, 11-8) as Northants pulled back their deficit and were now trailing 2-3.

Jane Durham steadied the ship with a three-game win over Little, while Taylor and Simon guaranteed their team at least a draw when they took a hard fought mens doubles against Richard Elliott and Fuller 3-2 (6-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-5, 11-5).

Northants pulled an end back when Elliot took the game of the match with a 3-2 (17-15, 11-9, 7-11, 8-11, 13-11) victory over Wilson, but it was Taylor who secured victory for Cleveland with an 3-0 (11-8, 11-9, 11-3) victory over Silk.

Northants took the last mixed doubles to reduce their arrears to 4-6 but for Cleveland it was another victory on their title charge and in their second match of the day Cleveland thumped doomed Yorkshire 3 9-1 to complete the day still ahead of the table on nine points from five matches and two victories away from the title.

Sunday saw Cleveland storm to the title by beating Oxfordshire 9-1 and finishing with another comprehensive win by beating Worcestershire 8-2 as they eased to the title by two points from their nearest rivals.

Hertfordshire took the runners-up spot by virtue of a draw with Cleveland over the first weekend and although they were beaten by Lincolnshire when the sides met, draws against Northants and Yorkshire seconds and a defeat by champions Cleveland meant Lincs had to settle for third spot.

Yorkshire thirds had a miserable campaign losing all seven matches and averaging less than two games per match. They will be joined in the lower division by Oxon who completed the season with one win and two points,

while Cleveland now look forward to a premier campaign next season

Barry Snowden

County Championships Press Officer

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