

# County Championships Veterans review

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## County Championships 2011-12

### Veterans Divisions Review

#### Premier

After a number of seasons watching Leicestershire and Yorkshire take multiple titles it was Sussex who finally reclaimed the title they last won eight years ago.

Sussex won five and drew two of their matches, a record matched by Leicestershire in the division, which was played over two weekends, firstly at Keighley and then finally at Ashford. In the end it was Sussex who took the title on a slightly superior sets advantage.

Both counties started the second weekend on five points, one point behind leaders Kent, but after a thrilling two days it was Sussex and Leicestershire who had overhauled reigning champions Kent to fight out their own battle.

Sussex and Leicestershire were level on match points and sets at the beginning of the second weekend and both recorded three wins at Ashford, both beating Kent while also playing out a draw against each other.

Sussex recorded victories over Berkshire 8-2, Cheshire 7-3 and Kent 6-4 which was slightly better than Leicestershire's record as the Midlanders beat Kent 7-3, Lancashire 6-4 and Yorkshire 6-4 to finish two sets behind their southern rivals.

Berkshire and Essex are the two counties leaving the Premier Division this season.

#### Division 1

Cleveland will be one of the teams replacing Berkshire and Essex in the Premier Division next season. They recorded six wins and a draw from seven matches in the division, taking the title by two points from runners-up Hertfordshire, after the two weekends played at Woodfield and Milton Keynes.

The match up between the top two took place during the first weekend and was the only point the champions dropped but it proved to be an exciting clash with very little to choose between the counties.

Herts took an opening set lead as Jimmy Walsh beat Tony Wilson 3-0 (11-4, 11-9, 11-9) but Cleveland hit back by taking the next two sets as Mark Simon beat Stuart Seaholme and Lindsay Taylor beat Glen Wilkes.

Emma Rose and Walsh took a hard fought mixed doubles over Wilson and Jane Durham to bring the sides level after four sets and then the next two sets were shared with Wilson beating Seaholme in four and Rose easing past Durham 3-0 (12-10, 11-9, 11-2) in the ladies singles.

A five game men's doubles win by Simon and Taylor over Walsh and Wiles saw Cleveland take a one set lead, and they guaranteed themselves at least a share of the spoils when Simon beat Wilkes 3-1 (11-9, 11-6, 5-11, 11-9) to lead 5-3.

Hertfordshire were not done there though and took the penultimate set of the match as Walsh took the battle of the number ones. He beat Taylor 3-0 (11-3, 11-8, 11-8) to bring the sides to within a set, and a final set mixed doubles victory by Rose and Seaholme over Taylor and Durham 3-2 (9-11, 4-11, 11-6, 11-6, 11-5) saw Hertfordshire fight back to record a splendid draw.

A shock 6-4 defeat by Lincolnshire put pay to the title aspirations of Hertfordshire when an Andy Wignall inspired

Lincolnshire recorded a fine victory. The Lincolnshire number one took both his singles and partnered Lesley Keast to a fine mixed doubles win over Walsh and Rose 3-1 (11-9, 11-9, 5-11, 11-5).

Despite their victory against Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire lost to champions Cleveland and draws against Northants and Yorkshire seconds did their own cause no good, meaning they had to settle for third place leaving the way clear for Cleveland to take the title.

### **Division 1B**

Gloucestershire are the other team who will be moving up into the Premier Division as they won Division 1B on twelve points after winning six and losing to eventual runners-up Avon.

Avon though will be kicking themselves as they were unable to field two female players when the sides met up at Graham Spicer Institute as they drew with Kent's third team and lost more sets due to missing a player.

### **Division 2A**

Division 2A was played over two weeks, firstly at Draycott and Long Eaton TTC and secondly at St Neots TTC. It saw a straight shoot-out between Nottinghamshire and Essex seconds who were the stand out teams in the division. The title came down to the match up between the sides on the first weekend.

Lee Neil gave Nottinghamshire an opening set lead with a 3-0 (11-7 11-6 11-1) victory over John Monk before their lead was doubled when Trevor Kerry beat Paul Cuming 3-1 (11-6, 11-7, 12-14, 11-9).

Essex hit back in the third set as Alex Abbott just got the better of Michael George 3-2 (11-4, 15-13, 3-11, 8-11, 12-10) to bring the sides to within a set, but a mixed doubles win by Debbie Inkley and Neil over Elaine Sayer and Abbott 3-1 (11-4, 10-12, 11-7, 14-12) saw Notts re-establish their two set advantage. However, Monk pulled another set back for Essex with a 3-2 (14-12, 6-11, 11-4, 8-11, 11-3) victory over Kerry as Notts led 3-2.

Sayer beat Inkley in five in a thrilling comeback victory 3-2 (10-12, 9-11, 11-9, 12-10, 11-5) to bring the sides level after six ends but this only proved to give Nottinghamshire a wake up call as they then reeled off the next three sets to record the win.

Both teams won the remainder of their matches giving Nottinghamshire a well-deserved championship, averaging eight sets per match throughout the campaign.

### **Division 2B**

Sussex seconds took Division 2B with ease winning six and drawing one match throughout the campaign – eventually finishing four points ahead of runner-up Wiltshire. Sussex took the title averaging nearly eight sets per match throughout the campaign.

### **Division 3A**

Yorkshire fourths were the stand out team of this division played at Halifax TTC and then completed at Draycott TTC. The White Rose county completed the season four points clear of Leicestershire seconds, winning all six matches in the seven team division whilst averaging exactly eight sets per match.

The Yorkshire team, skippered by Sandra Rider, who was supported by John Chew, Steve Kosmowsky, Phil Bell and Richard Priestley were pushed by Cheshire fourths when the sides met at Halifax over the first weekend. A last set mixed doubles win by Bell and Rider 3-1 (7-11, 11-7, 12-10, 12-10) against Sue Burgess and Rob Wylie completed a hard fought 6-4 victory which was the closest any county got to Yorkshire.

### **Division 3B**

It was a similar story in Division 3B as Warwickshire won six straight matches in another seven team division to finish four points clear of runners-up Northants seconds.

The Warwickshire quintet of Steve Bertie, Mike Brown, Phil Paine, Simon Griew and Dawn Sago were head and shoulders above the remainder of the county teams in the division which was played over one weekend at St

Neots TTC.

### **Division 3C**

Hertfordshire third team took a six team Division 3C but did not have things all their own way as they won four of their five matches but suffered a surprise 8-2 defeat at the hands of Hampshire firsts. However, this defeat was not capitalised upon by the two teams nearest to them as Essex third team and Worcestershire seconds both lost to Hertfordshire, and a drawn clash between the two counties deprived either from taking the title as they both had a superior sets average than champions Hertfordshire.

### **Division 3D**

Sussex thirds took Division 3D with a record of five wins and one draw from six matches. In fact dropped their only point of the season to Somerset firsts who completed the season in mid table and were the division's draw specialists with three draws.

Devonshire were the runners-up in this division completing the season two points below champions Sussex.

It was a fine all-round team effort from the south coast team who were represented by six men; Barrie Gilbert, Gary Bonner, John Hook, Wen Wei Xu, Prakash Varsani and Tony Catt, and were strongly represented by just one woman Christine Wicks, in their solid championship season.

### **Division 4A**

Staffordshire were the champions in Division 4A which was played over two weekends at Draycott and Long Eaton TTC. A last match decider saw them face Yorkshire fifths as both teams arrived with five wins apiece.

Staffordshire had a superior sets advantage so Yorkshire had to win the match in order to overhaul their rivals. It was the White Rose county who opened the match with a win after Dave Randerson beat Andy Dixon 3-0 (11-3, 11-8, 11-9) only for Staffs to hit back straight away as Zia Khan beat Richard Abrahams 3-0 (11-6, 11-7, 11-8) and Paul Myatt beat Neil Harris 3-2 (12-10, 11-7, 8-11, 8-11, 11-6).

Yorkshire levelled in the next set as Harris and Cath Johnson beat Dixon and Jan Hodgetts 3-1 (11-13, 11-4, 12-10, 11-6) and then took a 4-2 lead after Randerson beat Khan and Johnson beat Hodgetts in the ladies' singles.

Staffs pulled a set back when they took the men's doubles as Myatt and Dixon beat Harris and Abrahams 3-0 (11-4, 11-7, 11-8) to bring the sides to within a set, and a further victory by Myatt over Abrahams 3-0 (11-5, 11-7, 11-8) saw Staffordshire level the match after eight rubbers.

The penultimate set of the match saw the two number ones face each other and it was Dixon who beat Harris 3-1 (11-4, 9-11, 11-9, 20-18) to guarantee his side a share of the spoils and with it the league title.

Randerson and Johnson took the final mixed doubles with an 3-0 (11-9, 11-4, 11-9) victory over Khan and Hodgetts to complete the match in a well-deserved draw but it was Staffordshire who took the title by virtue of a superior sets advantage.

### **Division 4B**

Hertfordshire fourths took Division 4B by one point after weekends at Kingfisher and Ashford but they did not have things all their own way as they won five and lost one of their six clashes.

The match Hertfordshire lost was to runners-up Surrey fourths 6-4 when the team met up at Ashford, but with Surrey drawing three matches it was Hertfordshire who took the division.

### **Division 4C**

Wiltshire thirds were the form team in a six team veterans Division 4C as they won all five of their matches averaging over eight sets per match, taking the division by two points from Kent fourths.

The division was played over two weekends at Ashford and Trowbridge and it was over the second weekend that

the top two met with both teams having 100% records to defend. It was Kent who started brightly with Steve Johnson coming from behind to take an opening set win over Dino Ciorra 3-2 (10-12, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-6).

A win by Terry McKee over Peter Erps brought the match score level but a Peter Davies win over Glen Freeman saw Kent retake the lead at 2-1. This lead was soon levelled as Erps and Julie Dean beat McKee and Carol Homewood in the first mixed doubles 3-1 (11-8, 6-11, 11-9, 11-9).

Wiltshire then had a run of three sets on the bounce as Ciorra beat McKee in the set of the match 3-2 (11-7, 11-13, 5-11, 11-8, 11-9) followed by a ladies' singles win by Dean over Homewood. When Erps and Ciorra beat McKee and Johnson in a four game mixed doubles it was Wiltshire who were within one set of the title as they led 5-2.

Kent would not go away though and pulled a set back when Davies beat Erps 3-2 (7-11, 11-5, 6-11, 11-7, 11-7) and then took another as Johnson beat Freeman 3-2 (11-8, 8-11, 11-8, 5-11, 14-12) to bring the sides to within a set as Wiltshire led 5-4.

The final set mixed doubles proved to be something of an anticlimax as Freeman and Dean proved too strong for Davies and Homewood as they recorded an 3-0 (11-8, 11-6, 11-4) win to take the match and the title.

#### **Division 4C**

Somerset thirds eased to the Division 4C title as they won all their six encounters as they took the title by four points from runners-up Cornwall.

Such was their superiority that they beat Cornwall 8-2 when the sides met at Taunton in January, and it was Cornwall who took the runners-up spot from Devonshire seconds despite finishing level on points.

#### **Over 60s**

##### **Premier Division**

Essex retained the title they won last season and on this occasion it was Yorkshire who pushed them close this year as at the end of two weekends, both played at Milton Keynes, there was only one point separating the two counties.

Yorkshire went into the second weekend in first place after winning all their three matches over the first weekend's action. With Essex dropping a point to Surrey it soon became clear that the clash between Essex and Yorkshire was going to be pivotal in the destination of the title with Essex needing to win and Yorkshire only needing a draw.

As it turned out, this clash was never really a contest as Essex thumped the White Rose county 8-2 with only a singles win by Linda Simpson and one further mixed doubles win on the board for Yorkshire.

#### **Division 1A**

Lancashire won division 1A played at Halifax and Draycott as they took the six team division with four wins and one draw throughout the campaign completing the season one point clear of Yorkshire seconds.

A 6-4 victory by Lancashire when the top two met at Halifax over the first weekend proved vital as, despite the champions drawing their last clash of the campaign with Cheshire firsts, that was all they needed to win the title.

#### **Division 1B**

Middlesex could also find themselves joining Lancashire in the Premier Division next term as they proved themselves to be the form team in Division 1B this season winning all six matches throughout the division which was all played at Ashford TTC.

Hard fought 6-4 victories against Essex and Hampshire were followed by three more emphatic 8-2 wins over Bedfordshire and the second teams of Berkshire and Hertfordshire.

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