

Lancashire seal last-gasp Cadet title

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Lancashire take Cadets Premier title

Reigning Champions Middlesex received a shock during last weekend's County Championship Cadets Premier weekend when they led the event throughout both days but dropped to third place overall after the last set of their title decider against Lancashire.

The event saw Middlesex and Lancashire face each other in the final match of the weekend, played at Westfield TTC in Wellingborough, with Middlesex only requiring a draw to retain the title and Lancashire needing to win.



Emily Bolton helped Lancashire to the title

Cleveland went into the final round appearing to be out of the mix but a large win in their final match and a Middlesex defeat saw the runners-up spot head north.

Despite the snow around the country, all eight teams assembled at Wellingborough at least 45 minutes before the scheduled noon start and the first round of matches saw the reigning champions face another former winner as Middlesex met Sussex.

It was Middlesex who recorded a narrow 6-4 win thanks mainly to a brace of victories from female players Hiba Feredj and Zahna Hall.

The other first round matches saw Glamorgan push Lincolnshire all the way before Lincs recorded a narrow 6-4 win after their female players also recorded maximums with Beth Cook and Grace Potter winning twice.

Lancashire eased past Kent 7-3 and Cleveland walloped Leicestershire 10-nil to complete the first round of fixtures.

Round two saw Lancashire record a thrilling 6-4 victory against Sussex with Emily Bolton leading the way with two wins and she was well supported by her four team mates who each scored one win as Robert Barker, James Chapel, Callum Allman and Beth Farnworth celebrated a fine narrow victory.

This match was the highlight of the second round as the remaining matches were all comfortable victories with Middlesex beating Glamorgan 9-1, Lincolnshire defeating Leicestershire 8-2 and there was another whitewash for Cleveland as they thumped Kent 10-nil.

The outstanding match in round three saw the previously unbeaten Lancashire and Cleveland match up. After an epic battle the teams could not be separated as the match ended in a draw. Lancashire girls Emily Bolton and Amy Hutchins each recorded maximums but with Robert Barker being their only other team mate to pick up

a set the red rose county could only muster a draw.

For Cleveland it was the boys who performed with distinction as Billy Forster and Josh Harland both picked up two wins and, with Alec Ward also picking up one set, the match ended in a well deserved draw.

Middlesex thumped Leicestershire 10-nil to complete the first day on maximum points and there were 7-3 wins from Sussex over Glamorgan and Lincolnshire over Kent as all counties completed their first day fixtures.

Sunday morning saw round four as Lancashire beat Glamorgan 7-3, Sussex overwhelmed Leicestershire 9-1 and there was an 8-2 victory by Middlesex over Leicestershire with the outstanding match-up being a narrow 6-4 win by Cleveland over Lincolnshire.

It was a fine all-round team effort by Cleveland as Alec Ward and Katie Barlow led from the front with two wins each and with team mates Joe Clark and Hannah Clark each chipping in with one win it was enough to see Cleveland home.

Round five saw the beginning of Middlesex's grip on the title begin to loosen as they were held by Cleveland in a thrilling encounter, the result of which was in doubt until the final set.

Middlesex had their girls to thank for their share of the spoils and it was the boys of Cleveland who were instrumental in their draw as Hiba Feredj and Zahna Hall both picked up maximums for Middlesex.

Round six saw regulation wins by Glamorgan over Kent 7-3 and Middlesex overcame Lincolnshire by the same scoreline. Lancashire did their title hopes no harm at all with a 10-nil whitewash over Leicestershire.

The match of the round saw Cleveland appear to have done their chance of honours terminal damage as they just held on to draw against Sussex as they could never shake the south coast team off.

Despite establishing a 5-3 lead it was Sussex who won the final two sets as Holly Holder beat Hannah Clark 3-0 (11-9, 15-13, 11-9) and Adam Corell earned his team the draw with a final set win over Joe Clark 3-2 (13-15, 12-10, 11-6, 7-11, 11-6).

After six rounds it was a straight match up between Middlesex and Lancashire who were level on 11 points with Cleveland trailing a further two points behind on nine. The top two teams played out a marvellous match with neither team being unable to establish command as the match reached 4-4.

The last two sets were being played at the same time as Emily Bolton faced Hiba Feredj and James Chappell faced Kester Pardoe. With all remaining participants watching on both sets finished simultaneously as the Lancashire players both won in four games, Emily 3-1 (9-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-7) and James 3-1 (11-8, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7) to a thunderous roar from the Lancashire party with hugs, hand shakes and high fives all round.

Cleveland had just beaten Glamorgan 9-1, which pulled back their four set deficit over Middlesex and moved them up into the runner-up spot by a single set.

An enjoyable weekend was had by all which saw solid efforts from Sussex and Lincolnshire to consolidate their premier status for next season but we say goodbye to Glamorgan, Kent and Leicestershire who occupied the bottom three places.

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