

Leicestershire promoted to Senior County Champs Premier

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Leicestershire promoted to Premier Division

Leicestershire Senior 1st team will be a welcome addition to the Senior Premier Division next season after they won a highly competitive Division 1a played over one weekend at Halifax TTC.

There was not much to choose between Leicestershire and Warwickshire 1sts and they were both still in contention as they played their last match. However, with Leicestershire remaining unbeaten throughout their seven matches and Warwickshire losing their final clash to Yorkshire seconds it left the former to take the title by two points.

At the end of the first round of fixtures it was Suffolk who led the way after recording a 7-3 victory against Lincolnshire, while there were wins from Warwickshire and Leicestershire who each recorded 6-4 wins over Bedfordshire and Cheshire respectively. Yorkshire seconds and Norfolk drew to complete round one.

The second round of matches saw Leicestershire thump Suffolk 8-2 thanks to maximum performances by Chris Rogers, Dave Gannon, Karen Smith and Daria Dzierbicka. Warwickshire also won by the same scoreline over Cheshire with only Rachel Pilgrim dropping one set to Sue Collier 3-1 (11-7, 11-7, 10-12, 11-7) and in the last set Malcolm McEvoy deprived Mark Jackson of a maximum with a fine 3-1 (16-14, 11-5, 7-11, 11-9) victory.

Yorkshire once again drew, on this occasion against Lincolnshire and the round was completed by Norfolk who beat Bedfordshire 6-4.

The third round of fixtures saw the top two teams, Leicestershire and Warwickshire face each other and the two high flyers produced a thriller with Warwickshire starting the stronger as they took the opening two sets – James Ward beat Dave Gannon 3-0 (11-9, 11-9, 11-8) followed by a four-game win by Mark Jackson over Andy Lebutt 3-1 (6-11, 11-9, 11-9, 13-11) as Warwickshire led 2-0.

Karen Smith and Chris Rogers levelled the match for Leicestershire as they both won their opening encounter in three straight games, Smith beating Pilgrim 3-0 (11-5, 11-3, 12-10) followed by a 3-0 (11-8, 11-7, 11-7) win by Rogers over Ian Ferguson.

The next two sets were shared as Kate Hughes beat Dzierbicka in four which was followed by the set of the match to date as Gannon just beat Jackson in a five-game thriller 3-2 (11-9, 12-10, 7-11, 2-11, 12-10) as the match score now stood at 3-3.

Warwickshire then took the next two sets, both in five games to establish an unbeatable 5-3 lead as Pilgrim just beat Dzierbicka 3-2 (11-8, 11-3, 6-11, 6-11, 12-10) followed by a 3-2 (11-4, 11-5, 4-11, 9-11, 11-6) victory over fellow No 1 Rogers.

Leicestershire hit back in the penultimate set as Smith beat Hughes 3-0 (11-4, 11-9, 11-6) to bring the counties to within a set and it was Lebutt who earned his side a draw when he beat Ferguson in another five-game thriller 3-2 (10-12, 14-12, 11-8, 3-11, 11-4).

The remaining matches in the round saw Yorkshire draw once again against Suffolk while Bedfordshire drew with Lincolnshire while the only victory came from Cheshire as they beat Norfolk.

The last match on Saturday saw Leicestershire and Warwickshire once more mirror each others results as they both drew with Norfolk holding Leicestershire and Suffolk drawing with Warwickshire. Lincolnshire beat Cheshire 6-4 and Yorkshire defeated Bedfordshire 7-3 giving both sides their first victory of the weekend.

Standing at end of first day

Team	Played	Points
Leicestershire	4	6
Warwickshire	4	6
Yorkshire	4	5
Norfolk	4	4
Suffolk	4	4
Lincolnshire	4	4
Cheshire	4	2
Bedfordshire	4	1

Sunday morning saw Leicestershire move into an outright lead for the first time as they recorded an emphatic 7-3 victory against Lincolnshire and with Warwickshire only being able beat Norfolk 6-4, there was now a mere one set lead between the sides with both on eight points.

Another win by Yorkshire, this time 6-4 over Cheshire and a 6-4 win by Bedfordshire over Suffolk made things as interesting at the bottom and the top as all counties were scapping for every set.

After Round 5

Team	Played	Points
Leicestershire	5	8
Warwickshire	5	8
Yorkshire	5	7
Norfolk	5	4
Suffolk	5	4
Lincolnshire	5	4
Bedfordshire	5	3
Cheshire	5	2

Round 6 saw Leicestershire and Warwickshire both win once again as Warwickshire beat Lincolnshire 6-4 but Leicestershire, now firing on all cylinders, overwhelmed third placed Yorkshire 7-3 to end any title aspirations the home county might have had.

Yorkshire actually started stronger and established a 2-0 lead as Simon Pugh beat Rogers 3-1 (6-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-5) followed by another four game win as Martin Lowe beat Lebutt 3-1 (11-9, 8-11, 13-11, 11-6).

But Leicestershire hit back by taking the next three sets. Firstly, Dzierbicka beat Karen Smith in three followed by a thriller as Dave Gannon just snatched a tight five-game win over Richard Smith 3-2 (12-10, 8-11, 1-11, 11-8, 11-9) and when Karen Smith beat Rebecca George in four 3-1 (11-5, 10-12, 11-9, 11-6), Leicestershire had established a 3-2 lead.

Yorkshire hit back in the next set as man-of-the-match Pugh eased passed Lebutt 3-0 (11-7, 11-7, 11-4) to level the match after six rubbers but it was Leicestershire who then took control of the match by reeling off four sets on the trot to take the match 7-3.

Dzierbicka beat George in three hard fought games 3-0 (12-10, 13-11, 11-9) before Rogers beat Smith 3-1 (11-8, 7-11, 11-6, 12-10) then victory was assured as Karen took the battle of the Smiths with a 3-0 (11-5, 11-5, 11-8) victory over Nicola and it was Gannon who completed victory with a three game win over Lowe 3-0 (11-6, 12-10, 18-16).

Norfolk beat Suffolk in the battle of the East Anglian teams and the round was completed as improving Cheshire beat Bedfordshire 7-3.

With Yorkshire now out of the equation, Leicestershire were the favourites to take the title as they faced bottom side Bedfordshire in the last round while Warwickshire had to play Yorkshire who were still smarting from their defeat by Leicestershire.

In the end it proved too much for Warwickshire as they succumbed to Yorkshire 7-3 which was the same score Leicestershire beat Bedfordshire while in the remainder of the matches Cheshire guaranteed themselves survival with a 7-3 win over Suffolk and with Norfolk and Lincolnshire drawing it was first round leaders Suffolk who joined Bedfordshire in relegation.

Final Table

Team	Played	Points
Leicestershire	7	12
Warwickshire	7	10
Yorkshire	7	9
Norfolk	7	7
Cheshire	7	6
Lincolnshire	7	5
Suffolk	6	4
Bedfordshire	6	3

Results have yet to be verified by administrator

Barry Snowden

County Championship Press Officer

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