

Herts and Dorset set for Veterans Premier

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HERTFORDSHIRE AND DORSET SET FOR VETERANS PREMIER

With the Veteran's Premier Division saying goodbye to Cleveland and Kent for at least a season, the outcome of both division 1A and 1B would determine who replaced them in next season's Premier Division.

Division 1B was a straight shootout between former Premier Division team, Dorset, and Kent seconds as they went into the second weekend's action at Graham Spicer Institute with Dorset holding a slight advantage after starting the weekend on maximum points whereas Kent had dropped one point on the previous weekend against Berkshire.

Both teams remained one point apart when they met and they produced a thrilling clash, the result and destination of the league title and promotion was in doubt until the final set.

John Robinson gave Dorset an opening set lead with a 3-1 (3-11, 11-6, 11-6, 11-5) win over Mark Brown but Kent hit back in the next set as Chris Knight beat Brian Garraway 3-0 (11-5, 11-5, 11-9). However, Dorset hit back and retake the lead as Tony Clayton beat 3-0 (11-7, 11-2, 11-8) as Dorset lead 2-1.

Once again Kent hit back as Brown, partnered by Di Pearce, beat Clayton and Sanja Clements in the first mixed doubles 3-0 (11-8, 11-8, 11-4) and it was Knight who gave Kent the lead for the first time in the match as he beat Robinson 3-1 (11-4, 11-7, 6-11, 11-8) as Kent led 3-2. However, this lead was short lived as Dorset hit back with Clements beating Pearce in the ladies singles 3-1 (11-7, 11-13, 11-2, 11-2) as the sides drew level after six sets.

Dorset hit the front once again as they took the Men's Doubles as Clayton and Robinson beat Knight and Saxby in a five-game thriller 3-2 (8-11, 12-10, 11-7, 5-11, 11-3) but once again Kent hit back as Saxby beat Garraway 3-1 (11-6, 5-11, 11-7, 11-8).

The penultimate set of the match saw Kent retake the lead as Brown took the battle of the number ones with a four game win over Clayton 3-1 (11-4, 8-11, 11-8, 11-6) as Kent led 5-4, requiring one more set to take victory, whilst Dorset needed one set to earn a draw and guarantee themselves promotion.

The final set was the second mixed doubles, which saw Garraway and Clements face Knight and Pearce in what turned out to be an anticlimax as the Dorset pair fought off a strong first game challenge before pulling away to record a three game win 3-0 (12-10, 11-8, 11-4). In doing so, they earned a draw for Dorset and with it, the league title and promotion to next season's Premier Division.

It was a very tight battle in this division as both teams finished on an identical sets total but Kent would rue the

draw with Berkshire earlier in the season.

Dorset will be joined by Hertfordshire in next season's Premier Division who were promoted from Division 1A in similar fashion to Dorset in 1B as they beat off a determined challenge by Nottinghamshire with whom they drew. However, Nottinghamshire dropped a point to Oxfordshire to complete the season on twelve points, one point adrift of Hertfordshire.

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