

Veterans' County Championship: Yorkshire lead the way

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Both of the Veterans' Division 1 seasons got under way as 1A played their first round of matches at Woodfield and 1B at Graham Spicer institute. And with the possibility of a Premier Division place up for grabs for the top team in each division, there was all to play for.

The weekend at Woodfield saw all counties play three matches and it was last year's champions Yorkshire II who led the way at the end of the first weekend with an impressive 6pts, one ahead of near neighbours South Yorkshire, who in turn were one point ahead of Staffordshire and Warwickshire after the weekend.

Yorkshire are still in this division due to their first team being in the Premier Division and showed no intention of allowing this ruling to dent their title ambitions. As it turned out, their toughest clash of the weekend was their first as they faced Warwickshire in a thriller.

Phil Cawser gave Yorkshire an opening set lead as he beat Mark Jackson in four (11-8, 11-8, 6-11, 11-6), only for Simon Griew to level the match with a hard fought 3-0 (12-10, 12-10, 13-11) victory over Dave Randerson. A straight sets win by Richard Lightowler, returning to county action after injury, over Michael Browne saw Yorkshire take a 2-1 lead at the end of the first round of men's singles.

Yorkshire skipper Janet Adams joined the contest and partnered Lightowler to a mixed doubles win over Jackson and Dawn Sagoo 3-1 (12-10, 11-8, 6-11, 11-7) to give Yorkshire a 3-1 lead, which was cut straight away as Griew eased past Cawser 3-0 (11-4, 11-8, 11-5).

Adams restored her team's two-set lead with a 3-0 (11-7, 11-8, 11-6) win over Sagoo in the ladies' singles but a thrilling five-game men's doubles win by Browne and Griew over Randerson and Cawser (9-11, 5-11, 12-10, 11-6, 11-9) saw Warwickshire once again reduce their opponents' lead to one set as Yorkshire now lead by the odd set in seven.

Randerson guaranteed his team of at least a share of the spoils when he beat Browne 3-0 (11-7 11-5, 11-9) and in the penultimate set of the match Lightowler stormed past Jackson in three straight (11-4, 11-5, 11-9) to earn his team an unbeatable 6-3 lead. That left Warwickshire to bring respectability to the scoreline as they took the final mixed doubles, Griew and Sagoo beat Adams and Cawser 3-2 (11-7, 7-11, 10-12, 11-8, 11-6) and Yorkshire completed victory 6-4.

Yorkshire beat Avon 7-3 and Gloucestershire 8-2 to complete their maximum weekend but, with second weekend clashes against close rivals South Yorkshire and Staffordshire to come, the destination of the title is far from over.

Latest standings: Yorkshire 6pts, South Yorkshire 5pts, Warwickshire, Staffordshire 4pts, Lincolnshire 3pts, Worcestershire, Avon 1pt, Gloucestershire 0pts.

Division 1B seems a little lopsided at the moment as it is headed by Berkshire with maximum points from three matches but, with only Sussex II also having played three matches, the weekend ended with both Middlesex and Dorset also with maximum points after having only played two matches. Hopefully all counties will be level on matches played before the final weekend.

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