

Sussex Take County Premier Vets in a Thriller

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A three way tie on points after the second weekend of the veterans premier division saw Sussex regain the title by one set from Yorkshire who themselves completed the fixtures one set ahead of reigning champions Leicestershire in a thrilling weekend played at Draycott and Long Eaton TTC.

It was the Sussex squad of Richie Venner, Nigel Eckersley, Adrian Moore, Peter Bartram and Rose Rainton who caught everyone by surprise as Yorkshire and Leicestershire were fighting their usual battle and faced each other in the last match in what all thought was going to be a winner takes all decider it was Sussex who kept grinding out the results over the weekend and overtook their two opponents at the death to take the title.

The weekend started with Yorkshire holding a two point lead over Leicestershire, Sussex and Kent after the first weekend at Ashford and in the first round of matches Yorkshire were made to work before just holding off a determined challenge from Kent 6-4 while their nearest rivals Leicestershire were having their own battle as they just beat Lancashire also by the narrowest of margins and Sussex who did slightly better as they beat Hertfordshire 7-3.

The second round of matches on Saturday saw all three title aspirants record large victories as Leicestershire overwhelmed Cheshire 10-nil with Yorkshire winning the war of the Roses with a 9-1 win of their Red Rose Rivals and Sussex produced a solid 8-2 win over Kent.

Sunday morning saw all three counties once again record solid wins as Yorkshire beat Cheshire 9-1 with Leicestershire winning the midland battle with Nottinghamshire 8-2 and with Sussex beating relegation doomed Lancashire 7-3 it was left with a final round scenario which saw all the three top counties in with a shout of the title but with Yorkshire holding two point lead over their two rivals they looked favourites.

On table one Sussex were playing another relegated team in Cheshire and quickly moved into a commanding lead while at the far end of the hall Leicestershire were paying Yorkshire and as usual in any clash between the two counties it was proving to be a tight contest.

With Yorkshire only needing a draw against Leicestershire and holding a 3-2 lead things seemed to be going in favour of the Yorkshire team but then disaster struck as an injury picked up earlier in the match saw Joanna Roberts withdraw from her singles with Karen Smith and despite their being a set in it to Leicestershire moving going into the last set late replacement Sandra Rider stepped in to partner Tim Dyson but it did not have a fairytale finish as they were beaten in three by Andy Lebutt and Karen Smith which gave Leicestershire a 6-4 victory.

As Yorkshire were 3 sets ahead of Leicestershire going into the final match Yorkshire had done enough to keep ahead of Leicestershire but they were only four sets ahead of Sussex who needed a 9-1 win over Cheshire to give them a one set advantage over Yorkshire and that is exactly what they did as Sussex took the title with Venner and Rainton taking the crucial final mixed doubles over Sue Collier and Phil Biggs to secure the title.

Sussex, Yorkshire and Leicestershire have monopolised this division for the past 10 years and look likely to continue to do so in the foreseeable future but sadly we say goodbye to Lancashire and Cheshire who will be in a division 1 next season trying to reclaim their premier status.

Barry Snowden (Press Officer)

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