

County Championships: Middlesex triumph after four-way tie

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The final weekend of the County Championship Premier Division was played out at Wood Green Academy and ended in a four-way tie for top spot as former champions Middlesex and Derbyshire, along with reigning champions Sussex plus Berkshire all completed the season on seven points as each team won three, drew one and lost two in this most thrilling of divisions.

With Glamorgan's withdrawal, Middlesex sat out the first round of matches on Saturday and watched as Derbyshire beat Dorset 9-1 while Sussex and Berkshire fought out a thrilling draw. Berkshire took a 2-0 lead as David Barr beat Jack Bennett 15-13 in a deciding game to open the match for Berkshire, followed by another five-game win as Daniel McTiernan beat Bryon Kwan 13-11, 2-11, 11-3, 6-11, 11-5.

Sussex won the next two sets, after which time there was never more than a set between the teams and perhaps fittingly it required heroics from Harry Gledholt in the final set against Kwan, winning 3-2 (11-9, 5-11, 6-11, 11-7, 11-7) to rescue the point for Berkshire.

Berkshire did not have as much success in the next round of matches as they were thumped 8-2 by Middlesex as the former champs flexed their muscles and entered the weekend contest.

Nottinghamshire shocked Sussex in round two with a 7-3 win which saw Lois Peake being the only player to seriously halt Notts' march as she recorded a two-set maximum, but could only rely on support from Kwan who took the other set as he beat Lee Neil 3-1 (11-6, 6-11, 11-8, 11-4).

Derbyshire continued their progress with hard-fought 7-3 win over Kent which saw Derbyshire quickly establish a 6-0 lead before Kent were able to pick up a win.

First up on Sunday morning saw Berkshire continue their progress with an 8-2 win over luckless Dorset and Sussex continued their assault with a 7-3 win over Kent, whose own title aspirations were beginning to falter.

But the match of the round saw title protagonists Derbyshire and Middlesex play out a thriller. Middlesex started stronger as Gabriel Achampong eased past Shaun Marples 3-0 (11-5, 11-7, 11-8), only for David Arrowsmith to beat Jojo Seniorin in four to level the match. When Derbyshire took the next two sets as Emma Vickers beat Hiba Feredj and Sam Perry just beat Jason Wong 12-10 in the fifth, it was Derbyshire who looked in command.

Tin-Tin Ho brought Middlesex back into the match when she beat Abbie Milwain 3-1 (11-4, 10-12, 11-6, 12-10) and when Seniorin beat Marples 3-2 (11-5, 11-9, 9-11, 2-11, 11-6) the sides were level after six rubbers.

Milwain beat Feredj in three to restore a one-set lead for Derbyshire and when Perry beat Achampong 3-2 (9-11, 13-11, 11-8, 10-12, 11-8) to complete his own personal maximum it was Derbyshire who had established an unbeatable 5-3 lead.

The penultimate set of the match saw Ho survive a first-game reversal to beat Vickers 3-1 (13-15, 11-4, 11-5, 12-10) to bring the sides to within a set and in the final set Wong just had too much for Arrowsmith as he recorded a 3-0 (12-10, 11-5, 11-7) win to complete the match in a thrilling draw.

Before the last round of matches there were too many permutations to try to fathom out who would come out on top as Berkshire and Sussex lead the way on 7 points with Middlesex and Derbyshire behind on 5 points. But with Middlesex to play Sussex and Derbyshire to face Berkshire, anything could happen – and did!

Derbyshire blew away Berkshire 10-0 which ended the chances of their opponents as, although they were on the same number of points as Derbyshire they were well behind their rivals on sets.

The Middlesex versus Sussex match was a closer affair and saw Sussex going into the match with a superior sets advantage as well as holding a two match point lead. But it was Middlesex who struck first and quickly established a 4-0 lead before Sussex got on the board.

However Sussex tried, they could not halt the onslaught of Middlesex who were in irresistible form and ran out 7-3 winners – in doing so going ahead of their rivals who themselves finished runners-up, two sets ahead of Derbyshire.

[Click here to view more pictures of the event by Michael Loveder](#)

Final table

(County P-W-D-L-F-A-Pts)

Middlesex 6-3-1-2-38-22-7

Sussex 6-3-1-2-37-23-7

Derbyshire 6-3-1-2-35-25-7

Berkshire 6-3-1-2-28-32-7

Notts 6-3-0-3-33-27-6

Kent 6-3-0-3-31-29-6

Dorset 6-0-0-6-8-52-0

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