



Middlesex and Worcs get on winning track

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The opening fixtures were played recently at dual venues in this season's County Championships Veterans' Division 2B as Bedfordshire, Essex II and Middlesex II played each other at Batts, while further north Worcestershire and the second teams from Hertfordshire, Leicestershire and Northants each played three matches at Weaver TTC, Wellingborough.

At the end of the fixtures played at both venues it was Worcestershire and Middlesex who led the way with the Worcestershire squad of Steve Horton, Jason Thompson, Chris Hewitt and Margaret Dignum taking maximum points by virtue of 8-2 wins against Leicestershire and Northants and a 7-3 victory over Hertfordshire.

The Middlesex line-up of Steve Buck, Jeremy Banks, Radovan Zivkovic and Jo Radivan were the top team in their fixtures as they recorded an 8-2 win over Essex seconds and a 7-3 win over Bedfordshire and with both teams recording maximum starts their clash when all counties meet up later in the season will be interesting.

However, it was third-placed Hertfordshire were involved in the two most exciting clashes as Herts needed a last-set mixed doubles win against Leicestershire to record a 6-4 win, while another final-set mixed doubles victory saw them salvage a draw against Northants.

In their clash with Leicestershire, all of their squad contributed in singles wins as Gary Morgan, Dave Langham, Roger Pyle and Janice Laing all recorded one each, but it was two mixed doubles wins by Hertfordshire that were crucial as firstly Pyle & Laing beat Reza Kiani & Eileen Shaler 3-1 (11-9, 11-13, 13-11, 11-9) and in the final set Morgan & Laing beat Dave Grundy & Shaler 3-0 (11-9, 11-5, 11-8) to complete a hard-fought victory by the narrowest of margins 6-4.

Northants opened the scoring in their match up with Hertfordshire as Morgan beat Chris Haynes 3-1 (11-8, 6-11, 13-11, 11-9) but Kevin Bird quickly levelled the match when he beat Pyle and Northants then moved into the lead as Nigel Metcalfe beat Langham in four (10-12, 11-6, 11-9, 11-8) as Northants led 2-1.

Northants quickly extended their lead to 4-1 as they took the first mixed doubles when Bird & Christine Scaysbrook beat Pyle & Laing 3-1 (11-9, 11-8, 4-11, 11-6), which was followed by a singles win by Chris Hayes over Pyle in four (16-14, 9-11, 13-11, 11-8) as Northants now held a three-set cushion.

Hertfordshire hit back and took the next two sets to bring themselves to within a set as firstly Laing took the ladies singles with a 3-0 (13-11, 11-4, 11-7) win over Scaysbrook and when Herts took the men's doubles as Pyle & Morgan beat Metcalfe & Haynes 3-1 (11-9, 11-9, 10-12, 11-4) as the sides were now within a set.

Northants guaranteed themselves of at least a share of the spoils as they moved into an unbeatable 5-3 lead when Bird beat Langham in the set of the match so far with a 3-2 (12-14, 11-8, 9-11, 11-6, 12-10) victory but in the penultimate set Herts once more brought themselves to within a set as Morgan beat Metcalfe 3-1 (11-3, 11-9, 10-12, 11-9). In the final set a thrilling 3-2 mixed doubles win by Morgan & Laing against Metcalfe & Skaysbrook (11-4, 9-11, 11-9, 8-11, 12-10) saw Herts snatch a thrilling daw.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Worcestershire	3	3	0	0	23	7	6
Middlesex II	2	2	0	0	15	5	4
Hertfordshire II	3	1	1	1	14	16	3
Leicestershire II	3	1	0	2	14	6	2
Bedfordshire II	2	1	0	1	9	11	2
Northamptonshire II	3	0	1	2	9	21	1
Essex II	2	0	0	2	6	14	0

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