



County Championship: Sussex make early running

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The early rounds of this season's Veterans' County Championships, Division 3B have been played and the early front-runners look to be Suffolk, who have three big wins from their three matches, and Herts IV, who also have had big wins but have only played two fixtures.

In the early rounds, mostly played at Kingfisher TTC, Suffolk recorded a 10-0 win over Kent No 6, a 9-1 win over the fifth Kent team and comfortably beat Berkshire No 4 8-2, while Herts beat Norfolk seconds 9-1 and followed this up with an 8-2 win over Kent VI.

With the leading two teams enjoying comfortable wins there were still a number of excellent and exciting fixtures on show, none more so than the draw between Norfolk seconds and Berkshire IV as there was never more than a set between the sides as the match went one way and then the other.

Antony Baker gave Berkshire the lead as he beat Dave Atteridge in an opening set four-game clash (14-12, 6-11, 11-4, 11-7) but Norfolk hit back straight away in the next set as Steve Goodale beat Alan Cummings, also in four (11-8, 12-10, 7-11, 11-2).

And although Norfolk took the lead in the third set as Allan Nicholls beat Richard Fifield 11-7, 11-8, 11-3, a mixed doubles win by Baker and Liz Bookman over Nicholls and Zoe Watters (11-5, 11-5, 11-6) saw Berks level after four rubbers.

It was Norfolk who retook the lead in the next set as Atteridge opened his account in his second singles set with a straight-games win over Cummings (11-6, 11-7, 11-6) but back came Berkshire in the next set as Bowman took the ladies' singles with a 3-0 (11-3, 11-8, 11-9) win over Watters as the match score stood at three sets all.

The pivotal men's doubles set was next up and went the way of Berkshire as Baker and Fifield beat Atteridge and Goodale in four (11-9, 11-5, 7-11, 11-9) but in this most closely contested fixture Norfolk hit back as Goodale took the next singles set with an impressive five-game win over Fifield which saw Goodale pull away in the final game after the first four were shared before recording an 11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 6-11, 11-2 win as the match score now stood at 4-4.

The penultimate set of the match was the best as the two No 1's faced each other with neither player giving an inch and after five thrilling games it was Nicholls who just got the better of Baker 12-10, 12-10, 6-11, 9-11, 12-10 to give Norfolk and unbeatable 5-4 lead. But in the final set it was Berkshire who took the second mixed doubles as

Cummins and Bookman beat Atteridge and Watters 3-0 (11-7, 11-7, 12-10) to earn a well deserved daw for their side.

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