



County Championship: Essex retain Over-60s title

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After two thrilling weekends at Milton Keynes, Essex retained the over-60s' County Championship premier title by two points from Oxfordshire.

But they did not have things all their own way as they lost one of their matches when beaten 6-4 by former champions Yorkshire, although they had already sewn up the title by then as they were four points clear of their nearest rivals as all teams began their final round of matches.

Essex began the second weekend three points clear of Sussex and Kent with a perfect record of eight points.

The team of Stuart Gibbs, Peter Radford, Terry Guymer, Dave Bowles and Marjorie Dawson were in no mood to let and started the second weekend by thumping bottom side Hampshire 9-1 and were 8-0 ahead before Hampshire got on the board when Mike Rhodes beat Gibbs in three and before this they had beaten Kent by the same score.

Essex completed the retention of their title on Sunday morning when they were made to fight just a little bit harder they beat Cheshire 8-2 – putting them four points clear and ensuring they had retained the title.

Their final match was against former champions Yorkshire and with the title already secured Essex possibly did not start this match with the intensity of their other matches as Yorkshire were always in control after establishing an early 2-0 lead and although Essex pulled to within a set on three occasions the White Rose County sewed the match up in the clash of the two No 1s as Phil Cawser beat Gibbs 3-1 (13-15, 11-7, 11-4, 11-2).

Oxfordshire and Yorkshire could be considered as the teams of the weekend as they both started the weekend in a perilous position with Oxfordshire on two points and Yorkshire on one but with Oxfordshire winning all their four matches to complete the season as runners-up and with Yorkshire drawing their opening match against Cheshire but then reeling off three straight wins they pulled themselves up into mid-table safety.

At the other end of the table Hampshire were well adrift of the pace and lost all their matches and Kent will be thankful on two counts, firstly that they started the weekend on five points as they were unable to add to this tally but still finished the campaign one point clear of Cheshire who were unable to field a third man and as a consequence are relegated along with Hampshire.

Final standings

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