



London and Ellenborough top of the class in JBL

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London Academy held off a fast-finishing Cliffedale Chandlers Grantham College to claim the Junior British League Premier Division title, while Ellenborough pipped Burton Uxbridge to retain their Girls' Premier crown.

Boys

London went into the second weekend at the Derby Arena boasting a 100 per cent record, and they duly completed their first round of matches with a 4-2 victory over Ormesby firsts and a 5-1 margin against Ormesby seconds, before the league split.

Ormesby's first-string also lost to BATTs A, but had built up enough points at the first weekend to finish in the top half.

Harefield Academy were the fourth team to earn the chance to compete for the ultimate prize, finishing with a 3-3 draw against Cliffedale primarily thanks to Josh Bennett's double – ending Matt Leete's 100% personal record in the process with a 3-2 (11-9, 9-11, 11-5, 9-11, 11-7) victory.

With London Academy holding a three-point lead over both Harefield and Cliffedale going into the second set of fixtures, it was theirs to lose, and they showed no sign of relinquishing their hold on the lead as they swept past Ormesby 6-0, though the first two matches did go to five. Cliffedale laid down their own marker with a 4-2 win over Harefield, clinched by Nathan Butler's five-set triumph over James Smith.

Cliffedale needed to beat London to retain a chance and at 3-1 up, with Leete taking a double, they stood on the cusp. But Shayan Siraj beat Jordan Wykes in four and Daniel Simonson ensured a 3-3 overall scoreline with a defeat of Butler in three.

It meant London's 4-2 defeat by Harefield in the final round was irrelevant, but Cliffedale kept up their form to

the end, defeating Ormesby 4-2 to rubber-stamp second place.

Fusion, who had finished top of the bottom half of the Premier table, duly converted that into becoming Premier B winners after the split by winning all three matches against BATTs A, XLNT Draycott and Ormesby II.

There were some impressive records in the other divisions, with Middlesbrough College taking Division One in blistering style. Having drawn 3-3 with Pompey in their first match back in October, they stormed through nine successive victories for the loss of only three more individual matches.

Dublin A managed a 100% record in Division 2A and most of the other divisional winners were unbeaten – Halton (W9, D1) in 2B, Fusion II (W9, D1) in 3A, Wensum (W8, D2) in 3B and Halifax B (W8, D2) in 4B.

Division 4A was taken by Ashford Brunswick, who edged out Britannia having finished with identical records of seven victories, two draws and one defeat.

Leete topped the Premier Division averages with a 90% record thanks to 18 wins out of 20. In Division One, Middlesbrough's spearhead Alec Ward won all 20 matches, while in Division 2A Alex Gillen of Dublin A also had a perfect record from one match fewer.

Dylan Curry had 17 out of 18 (94.44%) for Market Rasen in 2B, while Chamika Weerasinghe had 19/20 (95%) for Fusion II in 3A. In 3B, Nathan Downes of Wensum notched 17 wins out of 20 for 85% but Rhys Davies of Formby had a better average 88.89%) for 16 wins from 18 matches.

In 4A, Sam Hume of Britannia had 15/16 (93.75%) and in 4B there was a 95% record for Zac Cantor of Halifax B (19/20).

Team of the Weekend was Dublin B in Division 4B, while the player award went to Kier Morton of Halton, who won nine of his 10 matches.

Girls



The winning Ellenborough team of Kate Cheer, Jasmin Wong and Denise Payet with coach Anthony Constantinou and Sandra Deaton (picture by Chris Rayner)

In the Girls' Premier, Jasmin Wong was the star as Ellenborough Girls bounced back from defeat to closest rivals Burton Uxbridge to retain their title.

That defeat came in the last round of matches of the first section, a 4-2 scoreline in favour of Burton including a double for Charlotte Bardsley – the highlight a 3-2 (11-5, 5-11, 11-5, 7-11, 11-8) victory over Denise Payet.

It meant Ellenborough qualified in third place – three points behind both Burton and Irish Girls, who shared a record of six wins and one draw.

The first sign that Ellenborough were up for overturning the deficit came in their first play-off against Irish, in which the Londoners clinched a 5-1 win despite going 1-0 behind when Katie McGlone beat Kate Cheer in five.

Payet levelled with her own five-setter against Rebecca Finn and the third 3-2 scoreline of the match saw Cheer overcome Mia O'Rahilly Egan.

Burton started with a 4-2 scoreline against Fusion to remain in pole position, and they put one hand on the trophy when they led 2-0 against Ellenborough in the penultimate round of fixtures. They were both five-set wins, as Zofia Wawrzyniak defeated Payet and Bardsley overcame Cheer.

It was Wong who began the fightback in four sets against Megan Gidney, and Payet bounced back to defeat Bardsley, also in four. Wong kept up her form with a 3-0 margin against Wawrzyniak and it was left to Cheer to complete the turnaround in four against Gidney.

Ellenborough ended with a 6-0 win against Fusion, though they needed five sets in matches two and three, but Burton were still in prime position as a victory over Irish would clinch the title.

Finn put Irish ahead as she held off Bardsley in five, but Mollie Patterson levelled the tie. Egan and McGlone enjoyed victories over Wawrzyniak and Bardsley respectively to put Irish 3-1 up but back came Burton, Wawrzyniak defeating Finn in three and Patterson levelling the tie once again.

It left Ellenborough celebrating by virtue of their superior sets difference as they retained their title.

In Premier B, Harefield Academy leapfrogged XLNT Draycott thanks to a 4-2 win when the two clashed in the final round, Zahna Hall picking up a double.

In the other divisions, London Academy finished with a 100% record to take Division One by a healthy margin, while Swerve were almost as impressive in winning Division Two, dropping points only in a 3-3 draw against Burton Uxbridge III in their final match.

Division Three went to Bishop Auckland Girls, who won eight and drew two of their matches to also finish boasting an unbeaten record.

The player averages were headed – of those who played more than 10 matches – by Wong, who finished with an impressive 15 victories out of 16 for a 93.75% record.

Patricia Ianau had a 100% record in Division One, with 15 wins for London Academy and Faye Leggett topped Division Two with 19/20 (95%) for Swerve.

Darcie Proud was also perfect in Division Three, 12 wins out of 12 being one better than Bishop Auckland club-mate Hannah Ward.

Wong was Player of the Weekend, while Team of the Weekend was Ashford in Division Two.

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