



County Championship: Notts hold off determined rivals

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Posted On: February 27, 2017

Nottinghamshire veterans' first team took the County Championship Veterans' Premier Division after a seasons long battle with neighbours and reigning champions Leicestershire in this thrilling event which was played out to a finish at Draycott & Long Eaton TTC.

The two counties had gone into the weekend having each won three matches over the first round of matches played at Ashford in October and they had identical 22-8 sets record with Notts just holding a two-game advantage.

The counties did not have too long to wait as they were first up on Saturday morning and even at this early stage this fixture looked pivotal and so it proved as Notts led for most of the match but were pegged back in the final set as the 10th set was the only time in the match that Notts did not hold the lead.

Jason Ramage opened the scoring for Notts with a 3-0 (11-5, 11-9, 11-7) win over Dave Gannon and they doubled their lead as Mark Short beat Maurice Newman in four. But a three game win by Chris Rogers over Lee Neil saw Notts hold a 2-1 lead after the first round of men's singles matches.

The first mixed doubles proved crucial in the outcome of the match and as it turned out the division as a whole as Mark and Sarah Short beat Rogers and Karen Smith 3-2 (11-8, 3-11, 8-11, 11-6, 11-9) as Notts now led 3-1, which became 4-1 as Mark Short beat Gannon in four.

Karen Smith took the ladies' singles against Sarah Short 3-0 (14-12, 11-6, 13-11) to pull a set back for Leicestershire and when Rogers and Newman took the men's doubles 3-1 (8-11, 11-7, 11-9, 13-11) against Neil and Short there was only one set between the counties.

Neil beat Newman 3-0 (11-9, 11-1, 11-4) to guarantee his side at least a share of the spoils as Notts now led 5-3 but a victory by Rogers over Ramage in the clash of the number ones (11-5, 14-12, 11-8) saw Leicestershire pull to

within a set. The draw was completed as Gannon and Smith beat Ramage and Short 3-2 (8-11, 11-8, 12-14, 11-6, 11-8).

As both sides drew they were still level on match points and sets and it was Leicestershire who pulled a game back on their rivals as there was only one game difference between the counties with Notts just holding the advantage by a single game.

On Saturday afternoon Nottinghamshire recorded a comprehensive 9-1 win over Kent and with Leicestershire only able to record a 6-4 win against Warwickshire there was now daylight between the counties with Notts holding a three-set cushion overnights.

Sunday morning saw Notts pull further away with an 8-2 win over Hertfordshire with Leicestershire only being able to record another 6-4 win against Kent which left Notts only requiring to win against strugglers Dorset to take the title and when Sarah Short took the ladies' singles against Sanja Clements in a thriller (11-6, 6-11, 3-11, 11-8, 14-12) they had now established a 6-0 winning lead and with it the title.

At the other end we said goodbye to Hertfordshire and multi title-winning Sussex, who will have to fight their way back to the Premier division as they were sadly relegated.

Table (subject to verification):



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