



County Championship: Bucks leading close race

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The first round of fixtures in this season's Veteran County Championship Division 2B was recently played at St Neots TTC with all counties playing three matches.

At the end of the day Buckinghamshire and Norfolk lead the way as both county teams have three wins from their three starts, with Bucks leading the way on a superior sets advantage.

Bucks started with a 7-3 win over Cambridgeshire No 1 and followed that by walloping Hertfordshire seconds 9-1 and followed this with the same scoreline as they eased past Surrey No 2.

Norfolk started with a 7-3 win over Surrey seconds before beating Bedfordshire seconds 8-2 and completing the day with a 7-3 win against near neighbours Suffolk No 1.

Bucks hold a three-set lead over Norfolk, while Herts No 2 ended the day in third place with four points, two adrift of the top two.

Two teams not featuring in the top three, Surrey No 2 and Bedfordshire No 1, were involved in the match of the day when they fought out a thrilling draw, the result of which was in doubt until the last set as there was never more than a set between the counties throughout.

Bedfordshire took an opening set lead when Gavin Booth beat Simon Vine 3-0 (12-10, 12-10, 11-9) but Surrey quickly levelled as John Calcutt beat Richard Steele 3-1 (11-6, 11-9, 7-11, 12-10) and moved into the lead when Daniel Heo beat Colin Luscombe 3-1 (11-5, 11-13, 11-9, 12-10).

This lead was short-lived as Bedfordshire took the first mixed doubles as Luscombe and Sandra Harper beat Calcutt and Michelle McGovern in a competitive match 3-1 (11-5, 8-11, 12-10, 13-11), only to see Surrey retake the lead as Vine eased past Steele in three. But Bedfordshire hit back in the next set as Harper beat McGovern in the ladies' singles 3-1 (11-3, 11-3, 11-13, 11-5) and the sides were level after six sets.

Surrey took the lead once again as they took the men's doubles with Vine and Heo getting the better of Booth and Steele 3-0 (11-7, 11-6, 12-10), only for Bedfordshire to hit back once again as Luscombe beat Calcutt in three and the sides were now level after eight sets.

The penultimate set of the match saw the two No 1s play each other and they did not disappoint and it was Heo who just prevailed with a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Booth (6-11, 11-5, 11-9, 9-11, 11-8) to give Surrey an unbeatable 5-4 lead and a guarantee of at least a draw. And that was all they got as Booth and Harper came from behind to take the final mixed as they beat Heo and McGovern 3-1 (5-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-3) to give Bedfordshire a well deserved draw.

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