

RILEYS BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP PREMIER DIVISION

Essex made the trip across the River Seven for the second time this season to face a newly promoted Gwent team who were buoyed by a win in their previous Inter County match.

Gwent Ladies look a match for any Premier Division team and as expected an evenly contested 'B' team match ended all square at 3-3. For Essex Clacton's Karen Breen on her recall to the team, Braintree's Lynn Kelly and Lady of the Match Nicky Bradley (Southend) gained the wins.

In the mens 'B' match Essex coasted to what on paper looked an easy 9-3 victory; however the match was far from easy with five of the Essex winning sets going to the deciding leg. Basildon's James Jennings (65.52) took the first set before the second set produced the match of the day. Colchester's Jamie Robinson (85.86) missed one dart at a double in the deciding leg and was punished by Gwent's Steve Gibbons (88.68). From this point all of the defining moments went the way of Essex. Springfield's Wayne Glead (71.73) and Andy Burmby (75.24) were joined in the winners enclosure by Basildon's Phil Halls (78.48). Debutants Paul Walker (78.69) Colchester and Southend's Paul Barham (75.09) who picked off a ton checkout in the third leg pushed further ahead. Riverside's Martin Compton (69.69) must be relieved he has finally learnt to win consistently on stage. Hockley's Man of the Match Shaun Walsh (85.11) hit a maximum in his win before Galleywood's Andy Kateley (74.58) finished the afternoon off with a maximum and a 12 dart deciding leg.

The Ladies 'A' team carried on where their 'B' team counterparts had left off the day before with an impressive performance against a strong Gwent outfit. The Clacton pair of Viv Dundon and Sheila Busby pushed Essex into a 2-0 lead against two Welsh Internationals and when Sue Waterman (61.14) produced her third consecutive Lady of the Match performance Essex were in control. However it still required Braintree's Amanda Dodd to hold her nerve in the deciding set to push Essex into second place in the Ladies 'A' league, with three wins from three matches and just three legs adrift of Cheshire.

Essex Mens 'A' team have struggled to find consistency all season and their performance against Gwent was another example to add to this. Early wins for Southend's Micky Peel (80.97) and Colchester's unbeaten Eddie Gosling (82.82) meant for little as Gwent pushed themselves into a 3-2 lead. Essex came back with wins for Hockley's Gary Phipps (80.52) and Harwich's Peter Barton (71.49). However the best of the afternoons entertainment was still to come. Basildon's Dave Orton (93.51) lost out in the first leg to Nick Kenny (85.98) but stormed back with a maximum and three ton plus checkouts to take the man of the match award and also level the scores. Once again it was two Harwich players propping up the Essex tail Alan Collins (74.28) lost out 3-1 Welsh International Stephen Cake (92.16) before Scott Lawrie (86.85) came up against the in form Adrian Rees (89.04). With the legs level at 1-1 Rees stepped up a gear using just two darts to pick off the doubles in the last two legs and in doing so giving Gwent the Mens 'A' team honours.

This left the final overall scoreline Gwent 15 Essex 21 allowing Essex to cement fourth position in the overall league. The destiny of the Essex season goes a long way to being decided in the next three matches as they take on the three teams above them in the league starting with a visit to Yorkshire in January.