

BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS PREMIER DIVISION

ESSEX vs GWENT

The final BICC Premier fixture of the season saw relegation threatened Gwent visit Chelmsford.

The **Ladies 'B'** started well with Steph Hewson (19.52) claiming lady of the match early on; Sharon Hawkins (Rayleigh) was unlucky to lose out 3-2, as was Nicky Mynard 3-1. Braintree's Lynn Kelly (19.21) pulled Essex level, however it was Chelmsford's Sue Baker who earned the draw winning the sixth set 3-0; the result wasn't enough for Essex to move off the bottom.

The **Men's 'B'** finished the season strong and cemented 3rd place with a hard fought victory. Southend's Stephen Hardy lay claim to the man of the match in the opening set with an average of 29.94; Southend team mate, Paul Marsh, was unlucky to lose 4-3 with a 27 plus average, before Walton's Darren O'Neill, Southend's Mick Peel and Colchester's Lee Woods rattled off the next three sets. Another Southend star, Dave Solly (29.04) and Springfield's Wayne Gleed (28.28) gave Essex a 6-2 lead. Brightlingsea's Tony Osborne on his county debut won 4-2 and Orsett's Michael McCombe won the final set 4-3 to give the 'B' team the 8-4 win.

Going into Sunday, the **Ladies 'A'** needed a good result and for other counties to slip-up to retain their title. But this wasn't to be as the Gwent ladies played well and Essex couldn't find those elusive winning doubles. Rayleigh's Sue Waterman (19.63) and Braintree's Amanda Dodd (20.08) were the winners in a 4-2 defeat, leaving the girl's in 4th place. Unfortunately Viv Dundon didn't quite make-it nine out of nine; she did finish as the ladies player of the year with eight victories.

The **Men's 'A'**, who've had an in –different season finished on a high with a win. Colchester's Eddie Gosling (26.81); Riverside's Sam Lepley and Rhys Hayden (26.41) were all winners as after six set's the counties were level. Essex then won the next four sets from Basildon's Phil Halls; Brentwood's Steve Johnson (27.45); Basildon Q-Ball's Ritchie Edhouse (26.66) and Riverside's man of the match, Barry Adlam (28.78); this was Barry's 240th appearance and is now Essex's most capped player, one-ahead of Sheila Busby. Saffron Walden's Wayne Bloomfield (25.51) won the final set to give Essex an 8-4 victory.

The weekend triumph of 24-15 left us in 4th place in the overall table with the same points as Warwickshire.