

BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

PREMIER DIVISION

ESSEX VS LANCASHIRE

Essex welcomed table topping Lancashire in the latest British Inter County Championship Premier Division fixture. At the start of the weekend Lancashire topped the Ladies 'B' team table; however Essex were in no mood to let Lancashire have it all their own way and this was epitomised by Southend's Nicky Bradley in the first set as she hit a maximum on the way to a 3-1 win. Clacton's Sheila Busby on her 225th appearance for the county made it 2-1 and with further wins for the Chelmsford pair of Nicky Mynard and Lady of the match Sue Baker (19.78) Essex had won 4-2.

Essex Mens 'B' team are strong contenders for the overall title and they showed their class for despite losing out in the first set they then won seven sets on the trot. Harwich's Alan Collins (23.56) and Colchester's Coen Wicamp (25.54) both responded well to being left out of the 'A' team, but the star of the show was Rainham's Richard Howson (34.95) who hit a first leg maximum and then finished the set off with a 12 dart leg which included a 161 checkout to become the first 'B' team player to take the Premier Division top average this season. Colchester's Paul Walker (22.73), Hockley's Gary Phipps (28.50), Basildon's Phil Halls (25.67) and Springfield's Wayne Gleed (26.37) pushed Essex 7-1 ahead. Essex lost out in the ninth set but all this did was strengthen their resolve as two thirty plus averages from Southend's Paul Marsh (32.61) and Galleywood's Andy Kateley (30.05) ensured Essex picked up a 9-3 win leaving them just one point behind leaders Yorkshire.

Essex started the Sunday's Ladies 'A' match with high hopes but left wondering what might have been. Braintree's Carol Pinfold (21.78) hit a maximum and checked out on 115 to win her match whilst Clacton's Viv Dundon (24.25) regained some much needed form in winning 3-1. However it was the visitors who won through 4-2.

The Men's 'A' match was to be a close affair throughout as not a single set was won to love. Once again Essex lost the first set as Harwich's Kevin Edwards (23.69) lost out in the deciding leg to Joe Murnan (23.93). Essex however quickly responded Colchester's Eddie Gosling (28.24), Brentwood's Steve Johnson (29.67) and Riverside's Mr Essex Barry Adlam (30.17) all produced high quality wins and ensured Essex had at least a share of the spoils for the weekend with eight sets still to play.

Lancashire responded with the next two sets but the in form Jamie Robinson (26.05) (Colchester) overcame Lancashire Captain Paul Whitworth (23.95) giving Essex the overall win. The Mens 'A' team win was also secured as Essex picked up three of the last five sets Harwich's Scott Lawrie (31.27) picked up the man of the match award in a hard fought 4-3 win over Steve Barrow (29.82), Essex Captain Darren Peetoom (29.28) picked off three ton plus checkouts in another 4-3 win Martin Barratt (28.21) the unlucky Lancastrian. Hockley's John McFall (27.72) saw Essex across the line with two 15 dart legs. The overall scoreline saw Essex come out 25-14 victors with the ever closer visit from Yorkshire looking to be the title decider.