

BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

PREMIER DIVISION

ESSEX VS YORKSHIRE

Essex welcomed Yorkshire to Chelmsford Social Club some three months after the original fixture was postponed due to the heavy snowfall across the country. The Ladies 'B' match started in a positive fashion as Southend's Nicky Bradley (19.17) and Yorkshire's Lyn Horne (20.89) both scored well. Bradley took the first leg and then missed three darts at double sixteen to go 2-0 ahead; Horne came down and checked out. Little did we know at the time but this was to be the hallmark of the Saturday, Essex getting to the double first, missing and then Yorkshire checking out. Horne maintained the momentum to win 3-1. Jenny Powell (17.36), Nicky Mynard (16.73) Sally Grainger (13.40) and Lynn Kelly (14.83) all had their opportunities to make their mark but missed doubles let them down. It was left to Sheila Busby (15.20) who beat Becki Emerson (14.30) to pick up the only Essex victory although Emerson was guilty of missing doubles herself.

The Mens 'B' fixture had been eagerly awaited as both teams were clear at the top of the table with this game in hand. It was Essex who came away with the higher team average although both teams averaged over 25, however it was Yorkshire who hit the vital doubles going away with a 9-3 victory. The first set again was an entertaining affair as Galleywood's Andy Kateley (26.09) picked off a 116 checkout in the deciding leg to put Essex in front. However the wheels then came off in style, firstly Riverside's Martin Compton (24.26) missed vital doubles then Hockley's Gary Phipps (26.53) lost his first match of the season as Yorkshire's Wayne Holland (27.33) and Kevin Shaw (27.23) started the Yorkshire ball rolling.

Mark Landers (20.93) wasn't at the races against Peter Jacques (28.90) before the match of the day saw Coen Wiekamp (28.89) have just one dart at a double as Craig Barratt (29.47) finished clinically. Wayne Gleed (24.00) missed bulls eye in the deciding leg from 170 but never went back as Steve Stacey (25.80) finished clinically, Mick McCombe (25.09) missed doubles in the first two legs as he lost out to Dave Copley (25.91) before Essex managed to pull one back as Harwich's Alan Collins (25.47) eased past an out of sorts Steve O'Donnell (19.59). It was normal service for the next three sets as Mick Peel (23.30), Eddie Gosling (24.52) and Paul Marsh (28.90) all missed doubles going down against Chris Gill (23.34), Russell Lockwood (23.73) and Keith Flint (27.02) respectively. The final set did see Hockley's Shaun Walsh (28.84) take the Essex Man of the Match to leave Essex two points adrift in the mens 'B' league with two games to go. Essex staged a remarkable comeback on Sunday winning eight of the first nine sets, however a rattled Yorkshire managed to compose themselves and they in turn picked up eight of the final nine sets.

Essex Ladies 'A' team have flattered to deceive on many occasions this season, but against Yorkshire they put in a performance which leaves them with an outside chance of retaining their Ladies 'A' team crown. Carol Pinfold (22.25) and Nicky Deakin (21.87)

played all five legs and not once when given the chance did they miss a single dart at a double with Pinfold hitting the vital double in the deciding leg. Sue Baker (19.52) eased past an out of sorts Pamela Haigh (12.56). The match of the day was billed as Sue Condon (20.16) against Karen Lawman (22.43), however neither Lady really settled as Lawman eased home 3-0. From there on in it was all Essex, Viv Dundon and Amanda Dodd both had identical 20.31 averages in overcoming the Louise's Simmonds (18.21) and Carroll (13.56) whilst Donna Russell (17.03) was taken to a deciding leg by Rachel Sheard (17.01).

When the Essex Mens 'A' team took the first three sets Yorkshire were starting to wobble. Jamie Robinson (28.80) Richard Howson (28.28) and Hockley's Man of the Match Steve Smith (28.91) were all in sublime form in overcoming Craig Buzzard (25.88), Keith Evans (25.44) and Michael Ridge (27.02). The fourth set was youth against experience, Southend's under 21 star Paul Barham (26.60) came up against the old fox in John Dean (26.72). Dean took the first two legs before Barham replied in the third. The fourth leg was the crucial one as Barham missed double twelve from 141 to break the Dean throw. Although he won the next leg Barham couldn't get close to Dean in the sixth leg and went down 4-2. Darren Peetoom (30.75) did little wrong as Dean Winstanley (33.07) turned on the afterburners and by doing so picked up the Premier Division top winning average and £700 in the process. Phil Brewster (27.27) was another to do little wrong as he came up against an in form John Boy Walton (29.91) and but for a catalogue of missed doubles Walton could have beaten Winstanley's average. When John McFall (27.02) went 3-1 ahead of Scott Waites (28.57) Essex looked to have steadied a little however two 16 dart legs saw Waites home 4-3 and with it put Yorkshire ahead by the same scoreline.

A busy Chelmsford Social Club was warming to what was becoming an excellent match of darts and the last five sets were not going to disappoint with eleven maximums scored and the same number of legs decided in sixteen darts or less. Steve Johnson (30.33) checked out on 110 to move 2-1 ahead but this seemed to inspire Yorkshire's James Wilson (30.19) as he hit two maximums and hit a 13 dart leg in winning 4-2. Barry Adlam (26.56) overcame Tony Hull (24.64) 4-1 to keep the match on a knife edge. Scott Lawrie (25.43) hit two maximums and checked out in 12 darts to level his set at 2-2 before Garry Thompson (27.52) moved into overdrive to take the next three legs in 12, 13 and 16 darts. Phil Halls (28.02) missed seven darts at a double in losing the first three legs against Brian Dawson (26.63) before winning the next three to take the game into the deciding leg, it was however Dawson who held his nerve to take the set in 15 darts. The final set of the weekend was no different to most before it, Kevin Edwards (26.34) took the first leg against Martin Atkins (28.56) missed darts at a double in the second with Atkins struggling which would eventually cost the Essex man the set.

It was Yorkshire who came out well on top winning 23-13 in a match which has all but secured them the overall crown and both mens titles. On reflection the scoreline somewhat flattered Yorkshire, however Essex will take heart that both mens teams with a 'B' average of 25.44 and 'A' average of 27.73 and their Ladies 'A' with a team average of 19.66 outscored their Yorkshire counterparts.