

BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

PREMIER DIVISION

HAMPSHIRE VS ESSEX

Both sides went into this fixture needing a result for similar but differing reasons. Essex needed a win to move out of the relegation zone whilst Hampshire required one to avoid being dragged into the relegation dogfight. As was expected before the start of play there would be little between the teams and it wasn't until the final couple of sets that the match was resolved. The mens 'B' match got the weekend underway and after the first four sets it was all square with the Essex wins coming from Harwich's Simon Cook (71.58) and Cressings Rob Turner (66.69). The ladies 'B' match started with Southend's Jan Corn just edging the first set with Hampshire picking up the next two.

The men returned to action and as in the previous group of four matches it ended all square as Springfield's Jimmy Noone (68.85) and Harwich's Peter Barton (77.73), maintaining his promising start to Inter County life with a maximum and a 108 checkout, gaining Essex their points. Essex ladies 'B' have had a troubled season, but team manager Mo Smee has kept faith with her squad and she was rewarded as two Braintree ladies Lynn Kelly with a lady of the match performance and Julie Vickers ensuring a 3-3 draw. This gave the men a welcome boost and Hockley's Mark Landers (68.82), Chelmsford's Andy Kateley (74.04) and man of the match Coen Wiekamp (78.75) of Colchester all won to give the men a 7-5 victory as well as putting Essex 10-8 ahead overnight.

The Sunday continued where the Saturday had left off with nothing much to choose between the two sides. Once again the first four mens sets ended all square with Hockley's John McFall (82.74) leading the way with a 160 checkout on the way to beating Mick Cookman 3-1, Southend's Mick Peel (85.93) was another to continue his good start to Inter County life with a 3-2 win. Essex Ladies 'A' team have been competitive right the way throughout the campaign and it was England International Viv Dundon (65.46) of Clacton who once again led the way, however her victory was the only one in the first set of three ladies matches as league leaders Hampshire edged home 2-1. Essex's men then regained the form that eluded them for a couple of matches earlier in the season as Springfield's Essex Captain Darren Peetoom (84.51) started a run of three straight wins together with Basildon's Dave Orton (88.41) and Hockley's Gary Phipps (71.16), who came from 2-0 down before checking out on 121 to secure his victory. Despite the general high averages in the mens match it was a ladies match which took the spotlight as Braintree's Lucy Ward-Geddes (77.04) just came out a winner against Hampshire's Wendy Reindstatler (74.43), unfortunately for Essex neither of their last two ladies could match the performance of Ward-Geddes so the Ladies 'A' honours went the way of Hampshire to leave them still top of the table.

With Essex needing two sets for both a mens and an overall victory from the final four mens sets of the weekend everything was still to play for. Colchester's Eddie Gosling (80.43) had a 121 checkout and a maximum on the way to a 3-1 victory, however despite the aid of a maximum Hockley's Shaun Walsh (72.00) couldn't add to the scoreline. Scott Lawrie (64.26) was left in the starting blocks by Danny Ballard but the Harwich marksman soon recovered and eased home 3-1 to ensure an Essex victory.

The final set of the weekend produced the best average of the weekend as Riverside's Barry Adlam (98.01) had a 101 checkout and a maximum as he ensured Essex moved above Glamorgan in the overall table with just two matches remaining.