

RILEYS BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

PREMIER DIVISION

LANCASHIRE VS ESSEX

Essex made the trip north over the weekend to take on a Lancashire team who at the start of the match were sitting two places above Essex in second place. The Ladies 'B' match started in the best possible way for Essex as Wendy Johnson (64.41) produced a lady of the match performance. Clacton's Karen Breen lost the next set but this was quickly followed by Wendy's Chelmsford team mate Nicky Mynard and Braintree's Lucy Ward-Geddes pushing Essex 3-1 ahead, however Lancashire have a strong ladies squad and Braintree's Jenny Powell and Chelmsford's Sally Grainger had no answer to Laura Howarth or Lancashire's Lady Captain Maria Ronson, as their two 3-0 wins in the final two sets left the match score 3-3.

The mens 'B' match twisted one way then the other as both teams tried to gain a stranglehold on the match. Lancashire fired off with two wins before Essex levelled proceedings with wins for Colchester's Essex Open Champion Jamie Robinson (88.41) who included a maximum and two 15 dart legs in his win and then Springfield's Wayne Gleed (83.49). Lancashire went ahead once again, as Darrell Claydon (77.49) could find no answer to Joe Murnan (79.83), but then Essex reeled off three sets in a row, Colchester's Paul Walker (69.33) started the ball rolling before Galleywood's Andy Kateley (86.61) who included a 12 dart leg with a 121 checkout and Thurrock's Mick McCombe (72.90) on his recall pushed Essex 5-3 ahead. Essex had been in a similar position last month against Cheshire and nearly blew it, this time they did. Phil Halls (63.87) went 2-0 ahead against Ben Fairley (75.81) but failed to close the match out and this started the Lancashire comeback. Martin Compton (72.06) and Paul Barham (69.18) both lost out 3-0 before Kevin Edwards lost out in a cracking match against Tony Green 3-2. This left the match score 7-5 and leave the overnight score 10-8 to Lancashire.

Sunday started with Braintree's Amanda Dodd picking up the first set for Essex Ladies 'A' as the morning's top team took on the third placed hosts. In the second set Donna Russell went down 3-0 to Liz Akister. The third set saw Sue Waterman miss a catalogue of doubles going down to her first defeat of the season. The fourth set saw England team mates Viv Dundon (65.67) and Lisa Ashton (77.73) go head to head with the Lancashire lass taking the plaudits. Clacton's Sheila Busby picked up a 3-2 win which left the last set with all to play for. It was Lancashire again who found the extra gear when it was needed as Olive Byamukama (88.41) produced an awesome display of darts with a 3-0 win against the luckless Nicky Bradley.

The mens 'A' match had all the hallmarks for a cracking encounter but once again Essex spluttered along rather than their usual purring. Jamie Robinson (78.00) enjoyed an 'A' team recall with a first set 3-1 win but man of the moment Scott Lawrie (73.67) again failed to find his Superleague form going down 3-2. Eddie Gosling (79.05) found World Championship finalist Dave Chisnall (99.87) too good on the day and when Andy Kateley (71.01) lost out to Lancashire centurion Paul Whitworth (76.41) Essex were staring down a barrel. However wins for Harwich's Alan Collins (73.26) Springfield's Andy Burmby (72.99) and Basildon's man of the match Dave Orton (80.85) Essex had pulled level at four sets apiece. Any hopes of a serious revival were soon dashed as Coen Wicamp (80.82) and Captain Darren Peetoom (66.42) both went down to 3-1 defeats. Riverside's Barry Adlam (71.67) did pull the score back to 5-5 but tame defeats for Mick Peel (64.80) and Simon Cook (67.32) left Essex wondering what might have been. Final Score Lancashire 24 Essex 15.