

BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS

PREMIER DIVISION

OXFORDSHIRE VS ESSEX

Essex made the visit to Oxfordshire to face a team who had made an accomplished start to life in the Premier Division. Indeed it was the hosts who started quickest taking the first two sets in the Ladies 'B' encounter, however Essex responded and picked up the remaining four sets. Braintree's Lynn Kelly started the ball rolling, Chelmsford's Wendy Reader levelled the scoreline before Clacton's Essex youth player Rosie Baldwin maintained the momentum on her debut. The final set was picked off by Lady of the Match Rayleigh's Nicky Bradley.

Essex Mens 'B' team also found themselves 2-0 adrift, but three sets on the bounce put them back in the driving seat. Rayleigh's Liam Showell (24.95) on his debut held his nerve to start the ball rolling, and another debutant Walton's Nick Groves (21.99) picked off a 14 dart final leg to level the scores before Colchester's Robbie Turner (30.06) on his return pushed Essex in front. Oxfordshire themselves responded picking up four of the next five sets with Colchester's man of the match Eddie Gosling (31.31) the only Essex victor. Indeed with Oxfordshire 5-4 ahead they looked to be favourites; however Essex called on all of their Premier experience to win the final three sets. Mick Peel (26.84) was clinical in his 3-0 win whilst his Southend team mate Paul Marsh (24.88) had to come from 2-0 behind to win his. Springfield's Wayne Gleed (25.91) then produced his best darts of the season to date to give Essex the victory and with it an 11-7 overnight lead.

Essex Ladies 'A' team started in a positive manner on the Sunday with Braintree's Carol Pinfold (17.89) picking up the first set. The second set was the match of the day as Rayleigh's Sue Condon (23.54) lost out in the deciding leg to Essex based Oxfordshire player Deta Hedman (25.43). Braintree's Essex Youth player Stacey Ellis (18.56) continued her rapid rise in the sport with a 3-0 win on her 'A' team debut and this was quickly followed by wins for her Braintree team mate Amanda Dodd (20.31) and Rayleigh's Lady of the Match Donna Russell (23.58) which gave Essex a 4-2 victory.

This left Essex Mens 'A' team requiring just four points for the overall victory; however Oxfordshire were in no mood to give the points away and with only Basildon's Phil Halls (23.44) on the scoreboard in the first seven sets Essex were reeling. Walton's Scott Lawrie (31.09) produced a man of the match performance in his 4-1 victory however this just spurred the home team on as they took the next two sets to put them 8-2 ahead in the 'A' match and level at 17 apiece in the overall. Springfield's Phil Brewster (25.23) benefitted from his opponents missed doubles in the deciding leg to push Essex ahead before Colchester's Jamie Robinson (30.18) turned on the style to give Essex a hard fought 19-17 win which pushes them into 3rd place in the Premier Division Table.