

BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS PREMIER DIVISION OXFORDSHIRE VS ESSEX

Essex made the visit to Bicester to face a team who had not made the best of starts to the season. It was the hosts who started quickest taking the first set in the Ladies 'B' encounter, however Essex responded and picked up the next three sets without dropping a single leg. Braintree's Carol Pinfold (19.78) started the ball rolling and taking the lady of the match award; followed by Jenny Powell and Nicky Mynard. Essex lost the last two sets for a 3-3 draw.

Team manager, Don Vickers, gave Witham's Barry Lynn (25.68) his debut and he won the opening set with plenty of confidence for the Essex Men's 'B', scoring a maximum and a 124 check out in a 4-2 win. Brentwood's John Costigan was unlucky to lose out 3-4 in the second set; then came seven straight winning sets; Springfield's Shaun Walsh (25.00) started the sequence; then Southend's Paul Marsh which included a 138 finish; Orsett's Michael McCombe won 4-0; Saffron Walden's Wayne Bloomfield (25.74) took the man of the match award, and scored a 180; Riverside's Rhys Hayden (25.59) scored a 180 in his win; Ritchie Edhouse scored three maximums in his 4-1 victory; and Romford's Shaun Lovett battled toothache and came out winning in seven-legs. Darren O'Neill was the final winner in the final three sets to give the 'B' team a 9-3 victory and Essex an overnight lead of 12-6.

Essex Ladies 'A' team started in a positive manner on the Sunday with Clacton's Viv Dundon (21.78) picking up the first set followed by Braintree's Amanda Dodd (21.98) on her 125th appearance winning the second set. The third set was the match of the day as Rayleigh's Sue Condon (23.43) lost out in the deciding leg to Winmau girls champion Casey Gallagher (24.95). Rayleigh's Donna Russell (19.27) won the next set, followed by Braintree's Stacey Ellis (22.77) with a 3-0 win and claimed the lady of the match award. Chelmsford's Sue Baker lost out to her auntie and Winmau ladies champion, Deta Hedman in the final set therefore Essex winning the 'A' match 4-2.

This left the Essex Men's 'A' team requiring just three sets for the overall victory; Brentwood's Steve Johnson (30.30) got Essex off to a great start with a 4-1 victory; Robbie Turner was unlucky to lose a seven-leg battle; suffering from a painful back, Basildon's Phil Halls (32.80) came back from two down to take the third set and the man of the match award; promoted to the 'A' team, Ritchie Edhouse (29.64) won the overall match for Essex. Walton's Bryan Margerison continued his winning streak with a 4-1 triumph; Springfield's James Allison returned to winning ways to take the next set; Saturday's man of the match, Wayne Bloomfield, was unlucky to lose out in a seven leg thriller; Basildon's Craig Vickers lost out before Springfield's Wayne Gleed (25.06) was victorious. Colchester's Eddie Gosling was Essex's last winner; but Captain Darren Peetoom was extremely unlucky to lose the last set of the day, despite two maximums and numerous 140's, that winning double just wouldn't come. Essex men's 'A' won their match 7-5 and with the overall victory of 26-13 pushes them into 3rd place in the Premier Division Table, with Yorkshire at Castleford next up at the end of the month.