

BRITISH INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

PREMIER DIVISION

ESSEX VS YORKSHIRE

With the weather decimating fixtures up and down the country this eagerly awaited encounter between two of the Premier Division's big hitters took place at Chelmsford Social Club.

Yorkshire had worked hard to ensure everyone made the coach and they will have been delighted with the performance put in by their Ladies 'B' team. Chelmsford's Nicky Mynard (15,97) got Essex off to a good start with a 3-1 win, but Yorkshire levelled as Braintree's Jenny Powell (15,77) couldn't maintain the form she found in winning the first leg against Josie Patterson (19.28) who hit a maximum and a 130 checkout in an 18 dart second leg. The Braintree pair of Lynn Kelly (17.39) and lady of the match Carol Pinfold (19.36) were the other Essex winners as the match ended all square.

The mens 'B' match looked as if that was destined to finish all square but a late surge from Yorkshire coming from 5-4 down to win 7-5 left Essex feeling somewhat robbed. The match often threatened to explode into life but even though both sides averaged over 25 points per dart and hit 250 tons between them in the 12 sets played they will feel a little disappointed. Rayleigh Cavaliers Liam Pender (24.53) edged the opening set in what was one of only two sets to go the distance of 7 legs. The second set was typical of the match Southend's Richie Howson (28.06) picked up the first leg in 13 darts and the third leg in 15 darts, in between Steve Stacey (28,35) picked up the second leg in 14 darts. However some disappointing finishing meant that whilst Stacey will be more than happy with a 4-2 win both players will have left the oche wondering what could have been. Saffron Walden's Man of the Match Wayne Bloomfield (27.14) eased home 4-1 and Colchester's Robbie Turner (26.10) flew out of the blocks and finally stuttered to a 4-2 win. Rayleigh Cavaliers Jimmy Allison (26.66) and Colchester's Kevin Edwards (24.80) both secured 4-1 wins but missed doubles proved costly for Essex as Yorkshire took the last three sets to go into a 10 – 8 overnight lead.

The Ladies 'A' struggled to find a rhythm, Clacton's Viv Dundon (18.70) checked out on 135 to take her set, Chelmsford's Sue Baker (18.63) hit a maximum in her 3-1 win and Stacey Ellis (16.34) finished clinically in her 3-0 win to push Essex into a commanding lead. Defeats for Donna Russell (14.37) and Sue Condon (21.36) were interspersed by Braintree's Amanda Dodd (20.71) whose 3-2 win earned her the Lady of the Match award and Essex a 4-2 victory.

In the Mens 'A' match it was all to play for with the overall match score standing at 12 sets apiece. Basildon's Phil Halls (25.21) took the first set on the deciding leg and in the second Dave Solly (29.22) checked out on 164 but couldn't prevent John Walton (30.04)

taking the set. Jimmy Allison (26.63) picked up two legs but couldn't overcome and in form Martin Atkins (29.09). Scott Lawrie (24.12) Darren Peetoom (25.38) and Alan Currivan (22.44) all had varying opportunities to pick up crucial legs but couldn't take advantage as Yorkshire raced into a 5-1 lead. Colchester's Eddie Gosling (24.96) hit two maximums on the way to a 4-2 victory whilst Riverside's Barry Adlam (27.08) picked up the Man of the Match in his 4-1 win. Mick Peel (23.08) lost out in the deciding leg of set nine before Springfield's Wayne Gleed (22.38) gave Essex a glimmer of hope for a draw winning in his deciding leg. However it was not to be as Phil Brewster (23.30) went down 4-1 in the penultimate set. The final set was to be the best set of the weekend as Steve Johnson (30.86) came up against the newly crowned Lakeside World Professional Champions Scott Waites (34.16). Johnson took the first leg in 15 darts with a 112 checkout; Waites came back winning the next three legs in 14, 18 and 15 darts before Johnson took the fifth leg in 14 darts. The sixth leg went the way of a jubilant and relieved Waites checking out on 79 in just 15 darts with Johnson waiting to pounce.

Overall darts was the winner in this match as both Counties fought hard on the oche but shared camaraderie away from the dartboard. Yorkshire moved above Essex in the overall table but both sides know there are some tough matches to come. For Essex it is a trip north to Cheshire next up on the 9th and 10th of February.