

# Derbyshire Squash Rackets Association

Press Release - 26 February 2008

For more details about Squash in Derbyshire see: <http://www.derbyshiresquash.co.uk>

Please remember to play your County Knock-Out Cup matches. The semi-finals and finals will be held at LA Fitness on 11/12 April.

Inter-County Matches: Ladies 8/9 March at Duffield SC; Men 8/9 March at Brampton Manor - matches start at 12:00, 17:00 on Sat and 11:00 on Sun.

## UK Inter-County O35 Finals 23/24 Feb

Derbyshire's O35s have won the County's 1<sup>st</sup> UK Inter-Counties title, surpassing the Ladies fine achievement last season where they were runners up. Derbyshire O35 qualified for the Finals weekend by virtue of their 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Division 1 North. Then Derbyshire beat Suffolk and Cambridge, but were just outclassed by Durham & Cleveland.



Derbyshire O35s L to R Jason Foster, Brendan Hickerman, Murray Scott, Richard Woodroofe, (presenter) John White MBE and Kevin White

For the Finals Weekend a straight semi-final and final would decide the title. Duffield's Jason Foster was making his debut for Derbyshire and the England O35 slotted nicely in the order at No. 2.

Greg Loach provided cover over the weekend and was to prove a great help advising players between games.

Middlesex were Derbyshire's opponents in the semi-final and it was their middle order which looked the most dangerous. Brendan Hickerman (No.3) and Murray Scott (No.5) were on court first. Hickerman's pace on the ball was too much early on for Alex Couch and he soon won the 1<sup>st</sup> 9-1 and led 7-2 in the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Couch's durability began to tell and he began to make in-roads to Hickerman's lead. At 7-7 Hickerman was lucky to find a service box nick to stem Couch's advance. A tight drop shot and Hickerman held game ball, but Couch played a determined rally pulling his opponent around the court. Hickerman looked to slow a little, and Couch increased the pressure, but after the serve changed hands several times Hickerman eased to a second game point with another deft backhand drop shot. A mistake from Couch gave the 2<sup>nd</sup> and most crucial game to Hickerman, 2-0. Couch took advantage of some wayward cross-courts and pouched the 3<sup>rd</sup> game 4-

9. Renewed aggression and pace from Hickerman forced Couch to defend from the back of the court, and from 6-6 his error count grew with Hickerman running through the last 4 points with ease to take the 4<sup>th</sup> 9-6 and the match 3-1.

Meanwhile, Scott took a 6-1 lead in the 1<sup>st</sup> only for Clive Johnson to level, but then Scott clicked into top gear and his crisp hitting and penchant for the cross-court nick soon saw him 1-0 up. Hitting the ball far too cleanly and purposefully, Scott looked unstoppable and duly wrapped up the match 9-6 9-1 9-1.

Derbyshire were now 2-0 up as England O35 Kevin White took on former England O35 Guy Olby. The tall rangy Olby was difficult to move out of position and took the ball very early causing White some initial problems. However, White was in excellent form and particularly fleet of foot enabling him to move Olby off the T and keep him under constant pressure. Olby wasn't given the chance to settle and White was well into his stride hitting some telling lengths and tight drops. White won through 9-5 9-3 9-1 wrapping up the match for Derbyshire 3-0, with two to play.

Richard Woodroffe had his chances in the 1<sup>st</sup> game against the redoubtable Scottish Masters champion Alan Thomson. However, Thompson's most efficient play and delicate touches afforded him the 1<sup>st</sup> game 10-9 and from there the next two came comfortably 9-6 9-3. Woodroffe perhaps allowed himself to get drawn into Thomson's style of play.

Jason Foster was up against a super fit and athletic opponent in Anders Yeo and wasn't able to capitalise on an early lead in the 1<sup>st</sup> game. With this effectively a dead rubber, Yeo sped through the last two games to win 9-6 9-0 9-4.

In the second semi-final Kent edged out the title holders Durham & Cleveland 3-2. The match of the weekend between Durham's Neil Harrison and Kent's Clive London settled this encounter and couldn't go unmentioned. Harrison sneaked the 1<sup>st</sup> game 10-9, only for London to take the 2<sup>nd</sup> 7-9. Another tough game went Harrison's way 9-6 and he then led 8-3 in the 4<sup>th</sup> holding 4 match balls. London, an O50 player, somehow found the strength, stamina and discipline to haul his way back into the game eventually winning 8-10. The fifth went London's way 3-9. This was one of the very toughest of matches, but played in great spirit and was a credit to both players.

On to the **Final** and Derbyshire fielded an unchanged team and again first on court was Brendan Hickerman, pictured below.



Brendan Hickerman

Hickerman, had been a little scrappy in the semi-finals, but here it can only be said that he produced the performance of the weekend. With electric speed around the court and now finding an excellent straight length coupled with a testing width on his cross-courts he was simply unstoppable. England O40 Duane Harrison had had a tough 3-1 win in the semi-finals, but was never allowed into the game as Hickerman blasted his way to a 9-1 9-2 9-0 win. The effect of Hickerman's performance instilled a buzz of expectation and confidence which inspired the team.

Murray Scott was also in top form once again and dispatched a tired Clive London 9-1 9-5 9-2. Scott's fierce, low drives and raking cross-courts meant London was unable to produce his competitive best.



Murray Scott

Kevin White was again in the lucky position to seal the match for Derbyshire and he was once again at his mobile best. His shots weren't quite as precise as in the semi-final, but sufficient to move Kent's Colin Payne around the court for the gaps to open up. Payne resisted well in the 2<sup>nd</sup> game showing his classy all court game, leading 7-6, but a lay-off earlier in the year had affected his core fitness and he was unable to respond to White's persistent pace around the court. White won 9-2 9-7 9-1 to give Derbyshire their first Inter-County Title.

Jason Foster capped the win off with a determined and emphatic 9-0 9-4 (best of 3) over Martin Rintoul; eager to show his exemplary racket skills, awareness and surprising élan around the court. Richard Woodrooffe fought hard and was 2-1 up against Mark Steedman, but couldn't hold on eventually going down 8-10 9-3 9-7 3-9 5-9.

### **Derbyshire Men's Leagues Round 11**

#### **Division 1**

LA Fitness extended their lead by 5 points to 27 and with just three matches left look to have secure successive titles. Their opponents this round were Ashbourne, locked to the foot of the table, but strengthened by the return of Grant Nicholson at No.2 after a long injury lay-off. Joel Hinds, Greg Loach, Lee Watson and Craig Simpson all had easy 3-0 wins, while Karl Murray was relieved to win the 4<sup>th</sup> game against a

typically strong fight back from Tom Machell, Murray winning 9-5 9-2 7-9 9-7.

Lumb Farm look a much better team with Matt Whitehead who is slowly returning to some form. However, Burton were able to collect 19 points, widening the gap with their second from bottom opponents. Marcus Thomas acquitted himself well against Carl Timms, leading the Burton man 2-1 and just missing out 9-6 in the 5<sup>th</sup>. Matt Whitehead was Lumb Farm's only winner saving two match balls in the 4<sup>th</sup> to beat Phil Brailsford 9-7 5-9 0-9 10-9 9-6.

Duffield took Hood Park all the way to the wire, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> place team were thankful to Richard Woodroofe's strong comeback from 2-0 down. Leon Armston overcame the loss of the first game to Andy Storer to win 6-9 9-0 9-4 9-6 and James Hodson was too quick around the front court for Laura Hill who couldn't find her trusty line and length. Adam Armiger struck back for Duffield, beating Simon Hurst 6-9 9-0 9-4 9-6 and Kevin White mastered the difficult bounce better than John Freeman, winning 9-7 9-1 9-7. Mitchell Cook started in rare form against Richard Woodroofe, and with some delightfully clean hitting took the first two 9-2 9-5 and led 4-1 in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Woodroofe's legs eventually loosened up and he began to string some pressure rallies together; Cook was flagging. Cook managed to serve at 5-6 in the 4<sup>th</sup>, but didn't get any closer as the experienced Hood Park man took the 4<sup>th</sup> 9-5 and 5<sup>th</sup> 9-1.

### Division 3

Draycott secured another set of maximum points at Hood Park 3 to lead Queens Park by 33 points and all but guarantee promotion. Hood Park 3 now look consigned to relegation unless David Lloyd err badly, but with Jenny Knibbs strengthening the team this looks unlikely. Hood Park's only point came from Richard Wormersley in a close match with Dave Bott.

David Lloyd's top order all won comfortably 3-0 against Duffield 3 and if they keep this team together next season could be challenging for promotion. Guy Legg just outlasted Richard Grindrod 2-9 9-3 9-4 2-9 9-6, but Ben Arnold was unable to hold back the energetic John Wright of Duffield 10-9 8-9 3-9 7-9.

Queens' Park suffered a rare home loss to Rolls-Royce who now pull themselves with 3 points of 2<sup>nd</sup> placed Queen's. Tim May led Chris Murray 2-1, but May took the last two games for Queens to take the lead and this was doubled as Dave Green beat Jon Brown 3-0. Alastair Parsons got the away side off the mark brushing aside John Pearson 3-0. Cliff Ransom levelled the tie beating Robert Essex 3-1. Queens looked confident of another win when Charles Noble bagged the first two games and was 7-5 up in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, but Fitz Haye managed to turn things round with some fine winners as he closed out the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> games went easily to Haye as he gained confidence and his opponent tired, the final score 9-5 9-6 7-9 2-9 0-9.

Burton 4 put up a great fight against LA Fitness 3 in a last ditch effort to avoid the drop, but a 43 point gap to David Lloyd looks insurmountable now. Gary Holmes and Dave Elliott just missed out in their 5<sup>th</sup> games while Clive Watson couldn't convert chances in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> games allowing LA Fitness to gain a full 20 points.

### Division 5

Despite being in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Queen's Park 2 received a thumping at the hands of runaway leaders LA Fitness 5. Only Andy Riley and Gordon McKenzie added to the season's points total as Alan Haggart, Garry Smith and Keith Howard stormed through their matches each 3-0.

Home side Burton 6 were ambushed by lowly placed Repton 3. Excellent 3-2 wins for Will Herbert and Tim Stretton gave them a much needed boost for the last three rounds of matches.

Division 1	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts.
LA Fitness 1	11	11	0	0	202	47	202
Hood Park 1	11	9	2	0	175	69	175
The Manor 1	10	7	3	0	132	90	132
Brampton 1	10	5	5	0	122	106	122
Duffield 1	11	4	7	0	121	128	121
Burton 1	11	4	7	0	113	147	113
Lumb Farm 1	11	3	8	0	78	174	78
Ashbourne	11	0	11	0	25	207	25

Division 3	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts.
Draycott	11	10	1	0	187	68	187
Queens Park 1	11	7	4	0	154	114	154
Rolls-Royce 1	11	7	4	0	151	103	151
LA Fitness 3	10	7	3	0	148	91	148
Duffield 3	11	5	6	0	125	134	125
David Lloyd	10	3	7	0	102	143	102
Hood Park 3	11	4	7	0	92	168	92
Burton 4	11	0	11	0	59	197	59

Division 5	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts.
LA Fitness 5	8	8	0	0	154	22	154
Queens Park 2	8	6	2	0	119	65	119
Burton 6	8	3	5	0	81	113	81
Kimberley	6	3	3	0	71	71	71
Repton 3	7	2	5	0	51	109	51
Belper	7	0	7	0	33	129	33

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