

ROYAL COUNTY TOPPLE MIDDLESEX IN HIGH NOON SHOWDOWN

Saturday 14th July saw 3rd placed Middlesex host 2nd placed Berkshire BA, at Hendon BC, with the leadership of the Home Counties League up for grabs.

The 1130 start time may have seemed convenient for the two Counties when it was agreed upon. Clearly, though, no one had had the foresight to predict we would be in the middle of a heatwave and it certainly did not help the players being out in the midday sun!! Mind you I can't remember the last time I had to report about complaints concerning never ending hot weather.

Building on the work being done to plan for the future current Under 25 Kyle Flatt, who played very well in the White Rose Double Rink competition and Ladygate club mate Stuart Phillips made their Home Counties debuts.

When the game got underway Middlesex started positively, leading 31-24 at 5 ends. At 10 ends Middlesex still led 60-54 and were up on 3 rinks. Leadership of the league was being dangled tantalisingly in front of the squad. Sadly, Middlesex wilted first in the quite oppressive conditions and over the next 5 ends they slipped to trail 85-94 at 15 ends. Only Rod Hackwell's rink, at that stage, was managing to stay in front but they had built up a healthy lead.

At 18 ends Middlesex were 15 behind but up on 2 rinks with a 3rd tying so, whilst the game seemed to be slipping in the wrong direction, there still seemed a chance of picking up good points.

Middlesex, frustratingly, despite their best efforts could not reverse the slide and ended up losing 119-142. In the end victory on 2 rinks saw Middlesex gain 4 points to Berkshire's 18.

Top rink on the day included the two debutants with Kyle Flatt, Michael Kopp (Uxbridge), Stuart Phillips and Tony Waller (Ladygate) winning 23-16. The other winning rink was Dave Knight (Isleworth), Pat Ryan (Broomfield), Rod Smith (Holtwhites) and Rod Hackwell who won 26-22 surviving a storming finish from the Berkshire rink skipped by Commonwealth Gold Medallist Andy Knapper.

In the days other games Kent beat Oxford 116-85 (21-1) and Buckinghamshire lost at home to Sussex 103-117 (6-16). These results leave Berkshire top of the table with 71 points, having played 5 games. Kent sit 2nd on 62, Surrey 3rd on 56 and Middlesex 4th on 46 with all 3 having played a game less than Berkshire.

Next up for Middlesex, on July 28th, is the long trip down to Aylsham and Snowdon BC, just outside Canterbury, to face Kent BA. In previous visits this has always been a delightful venue and a good green, can Middlesex produce the result needed to keep them in the hunt for honours?

Preview in due course.