

Essex 1st Team Report – 2008/2009

ICC Premier A - Final League Table

After finishing second behind Yorkshire last season, the Essex squad had high hopes for an equivalent finish for the 2008/09 season. However, it was not meant to be as injuries and problems with availability dogged the team throughout the season. On a positive note, the team welcomed a new player – ex-Indonesian international - Atu Rosalina Sagita. Following a stint playing in the Danish league, Atu married her Colchester based boyfriend and moved to Essex from Copenhagen in 2007. In 2008, Atu qualified to play for the County and, as a formidable singles and doubles player, she has been a valuable addition to the squad.

The Squad

The players who represented the Essex first team for the 2008/09 season (with the number of appearances in brackets) were:- Joel Gayle (9), Andy Frye (9), Caroline Westley (9), James Anderson (8), Peter Jeffrey (8), Daniel Plant (6), Atu Rosalina Sagita (6), Sarah Walker (6), Viv Gillard (6), Lynne Swan (6), Ben Barber (3), Tracy Dineen (3) and Paula Anderson (3).

I would like to congratulate Paula and James on the birth of their baby girl Sienna, who appeared at the start of the season.

Weekend One – 15/16 November 2008

The season's first weekend of matches saw the team without Atu, who had a long standing commitment to her French league club.

The first match against Hampshire was an opportunity for the team to gain some valuable points. The singles players started the season as well as they had finished the last by winning three out of four of their matches. Sarah had an impressive win over Jo Dix in straight sets and Caroline, playing singles in Atu's absence took three sets to beat Hannah Littlecott. Joel, who seems to specialise in long hard three setters did not disappoint when he beat Ben Tier 21-14 in the third. Peter and James, and Andy and Joel, proved as reliable as ever taking both men's doubles in straight sets. The ladies doubles matches were split one a piece with first pair Sarah and Caroline victorious. With the mixed doubles also split, Essex produced a satisfactory 7-3 win against Hampshire.

Match two against Nottinghamshire was a harder fought affair. Our singles players gave us a 3-1 head start (Joel insisting on going to three!). The first men's doubles match pitted Peter and James against England Internationals Nathan Robertson and Chris Adcock. A crowd began to grow around the court as it was clear that the Notts pair were not going to have an easy ride against the experienced Essex pair. Peter and James produced some excellent Badminton to win the first set 21-18. The second set was equally thrilling however, Nathan and Chris managed to get the better of the Essex boys by 17 points to 21. Peter and James' legs seemed to start running out of steam in the third end and even though the Notts pair edged them out to win it 21-18, for me and many other spectators, this was the most enjoyable and exciting match of the weekend. Following a clean sweep from ladies doubles pairs Sarah and Caroline, and Tracy and Lynne, and disappointing losses in both mixed doubles, Essex drew 5-5 with Notts.

The final match of the weekend against Surrey culminated in another draw for the Essex team. Yet again our singles players gave the team a 3-1 start (and yet again, Joel took three sets to beat Surrey's Rob Kettle). The men's and ladies' doubles matches were both split one each with both the county's second pairs (Andy and Daniel, and Lynne and Tracy) winning their rubbers in straight sets. Unfortunately, the county lost both mixed doubles in straight sets.

Elsewhere, solid performances by last season's winners Yorkshire and newly promoted Hertfordshire secured these teams in the top two positions in the league table at the end of the first weekend. Essex finished in fifth.

Weekend Two – 13/14 December 2008

For the second weekend of matches, the team travelled to Nottingham to play Lancashire, Glasgow & North Strathclyde and Leicestershire.

Saturday 13 December started with Essex beating Lancashire 6-4. The singles matches were split two each, as the girls impressed with relatively straight forward victories by Atu and Sarah over Lizzie Holt and Faye Ormisher respectively. James and Peter succeeded in picking up their game against Tom Dunlop and Harry Wright whilst both ladies pairs of Atu and Caroline, and Sarah and Viv picked up their respective games in straight sets. Peter and Caroline lost a tough mixed doubles against Alan Clarkson and Joanne Nicholas, whereas James and Viv put on an impressive display to beat Gary Fox and Julie Wright 23-21 in the third set.

The afternoon saw Essex take on Glasgow & NS in what produced four very close three set matches. The singles matches produced a 3-1 lead for Essex, with Atu and Sarah thrashing their respective opponents and Joel beating Kieran Merrilees in, shock horror, two straight sets (although it almost went to three: 23-21 and 22-20). Peter had what can only be described as a "bit of a nightmare" and lost his match with James in three sets to Glasgow's David Forbes and Stewart Kerr, however, second pair Andy and Joel pulled through and beat Colin Hill and Gordon Thomson 21-18 in the third end. The ladies pairs of Atu and Caroline, and Viv and Sarah yet again produced some excellent Badminton to win both rubbers in two sets. The mixed doubles were shared with James and Viv keeping it tight and just pulling through against David Forbes and Eildh Ballantine 21-19 in the deciding set.

Sunday's match against Leicestershire was another opportunity for the team to win much needed points. A clean sweep by Essex' singles and level doubles players saw the match at 8-0 going into the mixed doubles. Unfortunately, Essex was disappointing and lost both mixed doubles games. Final score: 8-2.

Yorkshire continued to impress and finished the second weekend at the top of the table with 41 points. Warwickshire, Hertfordshire and Essex were hot on Yorkshire's tail with 39, 38 and 38 points respectively. A thoroughly successful weekend for the Essex squad had put them back in contention for the top positions.

Weekend Three – 28/29 March 2008

The final weekend was always going to be a toughie. Essex was due to play against Warwickshire, Yorkshire and Hertfordshire, the other three teams contesting the top four positions in the league. Within days of the fixtures, Daniel and Sarah suffered from injuries and pulled out of the matches. This significantly affected the team's chances of a top three finish. Joel replaced Daniel to play number one singles and second team player, Ben Barber stepped up to the second singles spot. In the ladies singles, Caroline replaced the injured Sarah at second singles, which meant she was unable to play mixed doubles (players are only permitted to participate in two events).

The first match against Yorkshire proved hard work with the team losing 2-8. Congratulations go to Atu, who won her singles against Kate Robertshaw in straight sets and to Peter and James who beat the Yorkshire first pair of Andy Ellis and Robin Middleton. Joel fought bravely in his first singles narrowly missing out to Alex Marritt 20-22 in the third set.

Match two against Warwickshire was an equally tough contest. As had been the case against Yorkshire earlier on in the day, the singles tables were turned on Essex, with Warwickshire 1-3 up after they had been completed. Joel defeated Mark Sellwood comfortably in straight sets (at last a match from Joel that did not see us end up as nervous wrecks!). Atu had a close and thrilling game against National Champion Gill Pittard and, after three nail biting sets, she only just ran out of steam in the third end to lose out 19-21. Both the county's first level doubles pairs won in three close sets to put the score at 3-5 to Warwickshire going into the mixed doubles. Following losses in both mixed events, the final score was 3-7 to Warwickshire.

The final match of the season was against Hertfordshire, who were sporting their top ladies: current and ex-International stars Gail Emms, Natalie Munt, Liza Parker and Sue Rayappan. Atu and Joel won singles matches for Essex and the men gave Essex a 4-2 lead after winning both men's doubles. The ladies were always going to struggle against the Hertfordshire pairings of Gail and Natalie, and Sue and Liza losing both in straight sets. There were losses in both mixed doubles, although James and Viv almost pulled off one of their characteristic three set victories, only just losing out to George Bevan and Sue Rayappan 17-21 in the deciding set. Final score: 4-6 to Hertfordshire.

Final Position

I would like to thank every player who represented the Essex first team this season for their valuable contributions, but there are a few players I would like to single out as a result of their particularly good performances.

Our singles players deserve a very special mention with Joel winning seven out of nine games, Atu five out of six and Sarah all six. It always gives the team a boost when our singles players give us a good head start in matches. In addition, level doubles players, Sarah, Caroline, Atu, James, Peter and Viv all delivered victories in the majority of their games. On a negative note, Essex' mixed doubles performance this season has been disappointing with only three out of eighteen matches ending in victory. This is an area that the team need to work on in order to improve on this season's final position in the league table of fifth.

The final table for the 2008/9 season:

POSITION	COUNTY	TIES FOR	OF WHICH DRAWN	TIES AGAINST	MATCHES FOR	MATCHES AGAINST	SECTION POINTS
1	Yorkshire	8	2	1	61	29	61
2	Hertfordshire	7.5	1	1.5	58	32	58
3	Warwickshire	7	0	2	56	34	56
4	Surrey	6	4	3	49	41	49
5	Essex	5	2	4	47	43	47
6	Nottinghamshire	4.5	5	4.5	45	45	45
7	Glasgow & NS	2.5	1	6.5	37	53	37
8	Lancashire	2.5	1	6.5	35	55	35
9	Hampshire	1	2	8	32	58	32
10	Leicestershire	1	0	8	30	60	30

Karina Bryant, 1st Team Manager

Essex 2nd Team Report – 2008/2009

Having won promotion to Division 1C this season, I was expecting the team to find it tough going at this new level.

The first match of the season was away to Kent 1st team in mid October. The singles matches were evenly split with Essex's Ben Barber and Eddie Chow both winning and Kent taking the 2 ladies singles. In the Mens Doubles Eddie partnered Richard Accomondo to win 1 of their 2 rubbers, but Lee Scott and Daniel Munro were in great form taking both rubbers for Essex. The Ladies Doubles were evenly split with Kent, with Lynne Swan and Nicola Waller winning 2 rubbers for Essex. In the Mixed Doubles Lynne partnered Ben and Nicola partnered Lee to win 2 more rubbers for Essex, giving us a 9-6 away win.

The 2nd match of the season was another away fixture against Sussex 1st team. This turned out to be a very close match, with the home team just edging the match 8-7. Singles players Ben, Andrew Brunning and Sue Crompton gave Essex a 3-1 lead, but Sussex had the better in the Level Doubles making it 6-6 going into the Mixed doubles. Ady Munro partnered Andrew to take their rubber, but Sussex managed to take the final 2 rubbers and the match. The third match was a home fixture against Bucks 2nds which ended in a comfortable 13-2 victory for Essex. In top form for the home side on this occasion were Lee, Daniel, Ben, Lynne, Nicola, Sue, Lorna Booth, Sarah McGonagle, David Gotts and Daniel Chipperfield. In contrast the fourth fixture of the season saw us beaten 13-2 away to a very strong Surrey 2nds team who eventually turned out to be comfortable Division winners.

The second half of the season started with us at home to Surrey 2nds. The singles went Surrey's way with Ben preventing a clean sweep from the visitors. In the Mens Doubles Ian Pearson partnered Chris Dakin to take 2 rubbers and John Masheter partnered David to take 1 rubber. However the strong Surrey team, featuring Karen Beckman, were just too strong for our ladies and they took all 4 rubbers giving the visitors an 8-4 lead. Essex put up a great fight in the Mixed and Lynne and Ian, and Lorna and Ben won 2 more rubbers for Essex, earning a valuable league point despite losing the match 9-6. The 6th fixture of the season went well, with us travelling to Bucks 2nds in February and coming home with a 14-1 victory, although the score was a little flattering given that 7 of the 15 rubbers went to 3 ends.

The penultimate match saw us host Sussex 1st team in March. The singles went with Sussex, with only David Gotts managing to get Essex on the scoreboard. In the doubles however, Ian and Chris, Lynne and Lorna, and Sue partnering Viv Gillard won all of their rubbers....helping Essex to a 8-4 lead. Two Mixed rubbers from Lynne and Ian, and Viv and John gave Essex a 10-5 win and maximum league points. The final match of the season left us needing just 1 point to finish in 2nd place in the table. Unfortunately due to clashes with several other matches and tournaments we were unable to field a full strength team at home to Kent 1sts. We eventually lost the match 12-3, but there was some great debut performances fro Basil Tallah, Jenni Crisp and Emma Skingsley, all making their first 2nd team appearance.

Overall a fantastic performance from our first year in Division 1C. It was a better year than I expected and I fully expect us to be challenging for promotion next season.

Paul Barber, 2nd Team Manager.

Division 1C	Ties For	Ties Against	Matches For	Matches Against	Section Points
Surrey 2	7	1	86	34	19
Sussex 1	5	3	57	63	13
Essex 2	4	4	64	56	13
Kent 1	3	5	64	56	12
Buckinghamshire 2	1	7	29	91	3

Essex 3rd Team Report – 2008/2009

Essex 3rd team finished 4th in Division 5C, we only won 3 matches but a few of the other matches were very close and the results could have gone our way. Once again we used many different players, in fact we used 12 boys and 14 girls, with many playing their first senior matches. So hopefully the experiences that they have gained this season will help them next season.

I would just like to mention that Basil was the only player to play all 10 matches and he was unofficial taxi to many matches, so thanks very much. Some of the current players will be going to University next season, but there are some new U17's coming up, so I am sure that we will have a successful season. So once again a big thank you to all the players who played this season.

Graham Lane, 3rd Team Manager

Essex ICC 17 – 21 Team Report – 2008/2009

Essex entered a team into the ICC 17-21 tournament which was held at Hertfordshire Sports Village on the 18th & 19th April. The team consisted of Jenni, Sarah, Georgina and Charlotte and the boys Adam, Terry, Basil and Kaleem.

On the first day we beat Wiltshire but lost to Leinster and then beat Derbyshire which meant that we were 2nd behind an unbeaten Leinster in our group. On Sunday our first match was against a strong Kent side which we lost so now we were playing for 7 to 10. Our final match was against Gloucestershire which we won, but other results did not go our way and we finished 9th out of 20. It was a good team effort to finish in the top half. We had some tough matches because Kent were 1st and Leinster finished 2nd.

Thanks to all the players, who had two tough and tiring days.

Graham Lane Team Manager