

Team Captain Gary Webb summarizes the Masters Over 60's season

Last season having come so close to getting to the Inter County Championships finals having lost in the Regional Play-offs, we were determined to make this our quest for this coming year.

This year's Eastern Division comprised of Essex, Herts, and Suffolk & Bucks we had to play all counties home & away with the top team going through to the next stage. We began our season in October against Hertfordshire and we ran out winners 11-1 an encouraging start. This was followed by wins against Suffolk 9-3 and Buckinghamshire 12-0. We then went into a Christmas break. In the New Year we had the reverse games and we continued our winning ways of beating Herts 12-0, Bucks 12-0, and Sussex 11-1. We topped our group and lost only 5 games on route.

Through to the Play-offs we were up against familiar adversaries, Surrey.

As expected this was a tough match to win. We started with 2 men's doubles both went to 3 ends and Essex went 2-0 up. This was followed by 2 ladies doubles which were won by Surrey score 2-2. Then 2 men's doubles we won both 4-2 to Essex. Then 2 ladies which was halved, Essex went into the 4 mixed with Essex 5-3 up. We lost the 1st mixed then the captain, Gaz, who had not been playing due to injury, was forced to play and won the 2nd mixed 6-4. Needed 1 of the 2 remaining we lost one and won one. Essex O 60's made county history by reaching the Finals for the first time and joined the O 40's, O 45's and O 50's. A great weekend for Essex Masters, 4 teams in the FINALS!

The finals weekend arrived and we made our way to Stoke Mandeville. On the Saturday our semi-final was against Avon, an unknown side to us. We had 2 incentives to win this match 1. We were in the final 2. We got a lay in on Sunday as the losers match started at 09:00. For this weekend we brought in 2 men substitutes Lim Loo and JK aka John Kindred as Kevin was away and Gaz was injured. In one of the men's match's Lim took a fall and was so determined he played the rest of the rally on his backside and won the point! We went on to win the match 10-2. We were in the FINAL against the favourites Lancashire.

On Sunday, as we were waiting to get on court there was Lim with that big smile saying we can do this, we will beat them. We all looked at him and thought 'yea, dream on'. The match started, it was nip & tuck all the way no side cracking under pressure in the men's we were even 2-2, going into the last 2 ladies games we were 2-1 down and our 1st ladies were against Lancs weakest pair we needed this to go into the mixed 4-4 to give us a chance. Jane & Chris were in control then Janes calf muscle went, concern went through the team after a short break and with strapping Jane carried on and we went onto win, match score 4-4 and 4 mixed to play. We had to concede our 1st mixed through Janes injury. Pam & Richard went on to play as 2nd mixed this match was nip and tuck and we won the first 24-22. At the same time Janice & Lim went on to play 4th mixed they lost the first 17-21. Pam and Richard and a titanic battle in the 1st end lost 7-21. Back to Janice & Lim, Lim started to attack, yes attack! and won 21-13. Both matches crucial to each county, spectators from both camps willing their players on and acknowledging good shots from both sides. Back to Lim & Janice and went onto win 21-15. Match 5-5. Pam & Richard found their rhythm and was very tight the score was about 18-18 and Pam served an unplayable return, the shuttle whizzed across the man's face and this gave us the edge. The man was upset with this and his head went down. We went onto win 23-21. Essex 6-5 up. Chris and John went on knowing we needed to win as if we were to lose the score would be 6-6 and we would lose on count back. Chris and John won the 1st 22-20. The 2nd game was close all the way through Chris playing steady at the net and John started to dominate the match with his backhand cross court smash, 5 times he done this, 5 points and this tactic won the game 21-13.

We won the match 7-5 we were the ICC O60's Champions.

This result was overwhelming and left a player very emotional and in tears. Lim was right we can beat them and did. This win for us is the equivalent of Leicester City winning the football Premier League.

On the day the team that won the trophy was Jane Noremberg, Janice Flower, Pam Dallow, Chris Pennock, Richard Noremberg, John Stretch, Lim Loo, John Kindred and Gary Webb.

Throughout the season a number of other players were involved Linda Scrace, Barbara Childs, Kevin Martin, Mike Circus.

I am sorry you could all play the finals but note that you all played a part. If it were not for you playing and winning the games you played in the league we may not have been given the opportunity to play in the finals let alone win.

Thank you all for making this a memorable occasion.

Master s County Challenge

In January, we spent a weekend in Milton Keynes playing in the Masters County Challenge. This year we struggled to make an impression but we managed to do enough to stay in the division, finished 4th out of 6. Played Lancs, Surrey, Yorks, Hampshire, Leicester, Cheshire.