

Essex O50s Region 2 Stage 2



A strong 6-man Essex team travelled to Park Langley in Kent for Stage 2 Region 2 Men's Over 50s team matches on 18 February looking to make amends for coming 3rd out of 3 in Stage 1 also involving a 1-4 loss to Kent with Essex having a very understrength team back in November. Essex duly won both matches 4-1 versus Oxfordshire and Kent.

1st Essex 37pts – 2nd Kent 27pts – 3rd Oxfordshire 6 pts

Congratulations go to all on the day and particularly to the Essex team of John McFarlane, Nigel Bacon, Andy Russell, John McComish, Dave Lazarus and Pascal Dibattista.

Kent 5 vs Oxfordshire 0 - Kent 20pts Oxfordshire 3 pts

First up were the hosts against Oxfordshire. As reported by Kent captain Nick Peel this match was '[p]art of an excellent social and competitive day for all the teams'. The day starting with Kent putting themselves in an apparently positive position in this first match taking the match 5-0. The question was would Kent be strong in the afternoon to take on Essex knowing they were missing Duane Harrison recent nationals runner up who was skiing.

Essex 4 vs Oxfordshire 1 - Essex 18pts Oxfordshire 3pts

This fixture was played in good spirit with Essex looking strong while also having the advantage of having the largest squad ready to take on Kent with fresh players later in the day. Pascal, making his debut for the county, proved too fit, strong and quick for his opponent winning 3-0. John McComish fresh off the ski slopes started slowly but got into the match before going down 11/13 in the second game after some compelling stroke play. He carried the momentum into the next game to come back to 1-2 in games before his opponent stepped up his accuracy to level the overall tie at 1-1. A trim looking Dave restored Essex's advantage with a straightforward 3-0 victory, and the tie was secured when John McFarlane playing at his customary no.1 position took his match 3-0 against Chris Burton. Nigel then wrapped up a straightforward result for Essex with a hard-fought 3-0 victory over Aubrey Bell.

Essex 4 vs Kent 1 - Essex 19pts Kent 7pts

With both teams having beaten Oxfordshire this match would decide the group. It started with the No. 4s where Dave beat Sean Wardman who never really got going 'perhaps too close to his lunch' according to the Kent skipper. Essex then took their second win at no.3 in a really fine match with fresh-legged Andy returning to the court after recent injury coming through a close contest 3-2 against Pat Burt. Essex then took the result with Ville at no.5 for Kent solidly taking the first game but also igniting an old hip injury against Pascal who saw the match out 3-1. This made the no.1s and 2s dead rubbers but they were played as if all depended on them. Nick Peel at no.2 for Kent raised his level to its 'best for 3 months on returning from injury' in a good humoured but focused game taking the tie 3-2 after Nigel had 2 match points at 10-8 in the fourth having previously lead 8-5. The 1s finishing at the same time were also very competitive - Clive London did not always agree with the ref while John got on with the job and prevailed 3-1.

Thanks to our hosts Kent and the Park Langley staff for making all so welcome and providing excellent lunch. We march on to next season with a spring in our ancient steps...

Nigel Bacon (Captain)