

What a Great weekend!! Neil Hitchens retains his title against a fierce challenge from Ben Coleman, and Sarah Neller narrowly misses the ladies title relinquishing her crown to arch rival Rebecca.

The 2011 Essex Closed Squash Championships were hosted again this year by Club Kingswood in Basildon on the weekend of 15th & 16th of January. Around 100 of the best squash players in Essex representing many different clubs descended on Kingswood to take part in the competition, bringing with them a huge crowd of enthusiastic supporters who were treated to plenty of superb action. The full results and pictures can be found on our website at www.essexsquash.co.uk. Match highlights are below:

The Men's & Ladies Senior finals were last on centre court, the Men's Senior saw top seed **Neil Hitchens** (World number 120) up against 19 year old **Ben Coleman** (World number 139). The pair treated the crowd to a spectacular match with both players thrilling all and challenging the markers with exhaustingly long rallies and unbelievable retrieving. Ben made his mark but could not win the first game, Neil kept piling on the pressure to take the second and eventual clinched the 3rd game to retain his crown, both players left the court heralded with raucous applause from the crowd. This had been preceded by a superb Ladies Senior match. Kingwood's own **Sarah Neller** found herself up against arch rival (and ex world number 7) **Rebecca Macree**. Both ladies had reached the final after beating off some tough rivals in the early rounds. The match was so close that only 3 points made the difference between who won and who lost. Sarah made her mark from the onset narrowly losing the 1st after having game point, winning the 2nd by one point, losing the 3rd, then losing the 4th after having game point giving Becky a 3-1 win and the ladies crown.

The other finals had kicked off earlier with the Men's Plates, the toughest of which being the Senior plate where **Paul Wallace** took over an hour to eventually beat **Adam Safwat** in what only can be described as a marathon match leaving both exhausted. The Men's Age Plates saw **Phil Loader** beat a determined **Mike Campbell** in the o'45's plate, and in the o'35's plate **Mick Clarke** beat **Paul Goodhew**. The B plate was a heated match between **Christian Croll & Mike Campbell**, and the C plate saw **Graham Clark** and **Tom Kirrage** battle it out.

Back in the main competition the Men's O'35 number 1 seed and last year's winner **Jason Friend** from Connaught beat off all rivals and eventually **Mike Bacon** from Chelmsford in the final. The Men's O'55 title was taken by last year's runner up **Wyn Edwards** from Chelmsford, just beating Clements Hall's **Steve Hutson**. In the Ladies O'50's Bishop's Stortford's **Kath Kemp** retained her title to beat **Sue Vine**, and went on to beat Kingswood's **Kay Dalton** in the Ladies O'40's.

Waterside's Andrew Pell took the Men's C title beating Woodford Well's newcomer **Michael Walford-Grant** in a marathon final. The path to the Men's B title had been grueling for both Kingswood finalists, **Adam Hills** battled back from match ball down to beat last year's runner up **Ryan Worthington**. The Men's O'45's saw Gidea Park's **Francis Engerer** beat off Springhealth's **Nigel Bacon** after a gripping match.

The weekend was a great success with all matches were fiercely contested and marked to a high standard, treating spectators to thrilling demonstrations of skill & fitness.

Thanks to a sterling effort by markers and referees **Paul Clarke**, **Sue Woodhouse** and **Mike Campbell** all play was kept under control, and help over the weekend from **Carl**

George ensured all went to schedule. Finalists received a trophy and prize thanks to generous sponsorship from **NSO Associates**, which were presented by NSO's Director and Essex SRA's treasurer **Elaine Oddie**.

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And Many Thanks to our markers

Paul Clarke, Sue Woodhouse & Mike Campbell

Special thanks to all the players and spectators without whom there would not be a tournament

Dave Neller

Chairman

Essex Squash & Racketball Association