

CHAMPIONS AGAIN AFTER 62 YEARS

A SPLENDID ACHIEVEMENT BY THE LADIES

SURREY BEATEN DECISIVELY IN COUNTY WEEK
DECIDER

PROMISE OF 1962 BRILLIANTLY FULFILLED

By Mrs. Freda Hann

County Week

Our first match at Eastbourne was against Warwickshire and this year we achieved the victory so narrowly denied to us in 1962. In fairness it must be mentioned that Warwickshire were without Mrs. Brewer who had partnered Mrs.

Ann Jones for so long and this, no doubt, weakened their team. We decided to divide our strength for this match—a gamble which came off. Mrs. Shenton was paired with Miss Starkie at No. 1, Mrs. Clark and Miss Fulton at No. 2 and Miss Cooper went in at No. 3 with Mrs. Hustwit. The result was a 6-3 victory and although our third pair did not win a rubber they took the Warwickshire first and third pairs to three sets and we hoped that the experience gained would pay dividends later—which fortunately it did.

Our match against Devon was a little too close for comfort—however we nosed out 5-4 and so all was well. Miss Starkie and Mrs. Shenton won their three rubbers quite comfortably, but Mrs. Clark and Miss Fulton were not quite up to their usual sparkle and won only one rubber and it therefore was left to our third pair to save the situation, and by doing so cover themselves with glory as it had been a very near thing. Devon had fielded a very well balanced side which included three ranked players and so all in all we did well to win.

Our opponents on Wednesday were Lancashire and we felt this to be a good opportunity to rest Miss Fulton as she had a lot of work in front of her before the week was out and this also gave us the opportunity to bring in Miss Holdsworth, who, up to now, had been “waiting in the wings.” Mrs. Clark and Miss Holdsworth were paired together very successfully and won two rubbers. As expected our first pair won all three and Miss Cooper and Mrs. Hustwit won two—scoring an excellent win over the Lancashire 1st pair in straight sets.

No Resting on Laurels

We now had three wins under our belt and it was comforting to know that we had kept our place in Group 1 for another year. However, the girls had no intention of resting on their laurels, which was just as well as we still had the two strongest teams to play, Kent and Surrey.

Having brought Miss Holdsworth in and with Miss Fulton back refreshed we were now faced with having to re-shuffle the team in order to get the most favourable combinations. It seemed a great pity to split Miss Starkie and Mrs. Shenton, so far unbeaten, but this we had to do, otherwise it would have meant Miss Cooper and Miss Holdsworth playing together, which we wished to avoid. It was natural to restore Miss Cooper to Miss Starkie as this pairing had won 13 out of 15 rubbers in 1962 and we also wanted to keep

Mrs. Clark and Miss Fulton together. Mrs. Shenton was playing so very well and was altogether such a competent performer, we felt confident that she and Miss Holdsworth would pack a very hefty punch in the bottom bracket. Sally was fresh and Elaine so far unbeaten, we were sure they had it in them to win two rubbers against Kent. Depending on Elizabeth and Margaret winning three and our second pair two rubbers, we visualised a 7-2 victory over Kent and this was realised.

Until now we had lived only a day at a time and thought only of the match in hand, consequently we were a little stunned to find ourselves runners-up at least, and indeed in some quarters favourites for the title. Friday dawned, hot and sunny, and our players were fit and "raring to go." Looking back on this memorable day I am amazed that everyone was so calm and collected and apparently oblivious of the importance of the occasion. Surrey were so far undefeated, as were Yorkshire, and it seemed that our job was simply to go out there and play them for the title. I think it was the fact that we had so much to gain and nothing at all to lose which gave our girls their superb confidence on that last day. At worst we would be runners-up, quite a feat in itself.

If Yorkshire were calm and collected, this could not be said for either Surrey or the Television people. Rumour had reached us that the former were not a little worried by our decisive victory over Kent—and perhaps after all they had been a little premature in ordering their celebration champagne! Mr. Emlyn Jones of A.T.V. was busy persuading the Referee to let him change his programme in order to televise what had turned out to be the Championship match. Law and order prevailed at last, 11 o'clock arrived and the two teams went on to court—while I tried to sit back and endeavour to look relaxed. I felt that keeping the team the same as against Kent was the best possible thing to do and the time for worrying was past. In order to be in the running at all for this match we needed to be 2-1 up at lunch and 4-2 up at tea, otherwise if things got too close nervous tension could creep in and might well spoil our chances as Surrey were far more used to playing championship matches than were Yorkshire.

Elizabeth and Margaret got off to a good start by giving short shrift to the highly respected partnership of Mrs. A. Mills and Miss J. Kemp to the tune of 6-1, 6-2 and Valerie and Joyce were not far behind with their victory over the

Surrey third pair and still on court our third pair were having a great battle with the Surrey leaders and although we lost this match, I am certain it sowed seeds of disquiet in the enemy's ranks. So far so good.

After lunch our second pair engaged the Surrey first pair and although it seemed to be a good game, we were nevertheless a set and 2-4 down. At this point, however, things began to happen and apparent Surrey winners were lobbed back time and time again. Persistence paid and gradually we caught up and, indeed, won that set without further loss. Then the pattern of play changed and Yorkshire became the aggressors and it was Surrey's turn to scramble, but all to no avail. Joyce and Valerie were not to be denied and won the final set by 6-2. A really splendid win and without doubt a back-breaker for Surrey. By this time Elizabeth and Margaret had notched another win and Elaine and Sally were fighting a third set with the Surrey second pair—only to lose narrowly. The important thing was we had reached our target of 4-2 up at tea and one more rubber was all we needed—could we do it? Elizabeth and Margaret soon proved we could by beating Miss P. Hird and Miss C. Yates-Bell quite comfortably and although I could not get near enough to the court to see the last shot, I certainly saw the Yorkshire rackets go up in the air and I knew that after 62 years the incredible had happened and that Yorkshire were the Champion County. Just to make doubly sure Elaine and Sally came in with another win and in the circumstances Joyce and Valerie could be excused, the hunt being off, in losing their last match.

Whether or not the TV cameras had inspired our girls will never be known, but inspired they certainly were and each and everyone of them had given of their best, not only on that last wonderful day, but for the whole of the week.

SUCCESS WORTH CELEBRATING

YORKSHIRE L.T.A. HONOUR THE LADIES TEAM

GRASS COURT CHAMPIONS AGAIN AFTER 62 YEARS

When the Yorkshire ladies' team defeated Surrey in the final match of County Week's Group 1 campaign at Eastbourne they won the Championship which Yorkshire last won in 1901. Naturally this feat warranted a celebration

and this the Yorkshire County L.T.A. duly arranged at Leeds on December 5th, 1963.

Mrs. Freda Hann (non-playing captain) and her winning team were given places of honour beside the President, Mr. H. R. Marsland, at the top table. The function was also graced by the attendance of the Secretary of the Lawn Tennis Association, Mr. Basil Reay, O.B.E. and Mrs. Reay.

Special Tribute

Mr. Marsland congratulated Mrs. Hann and the players on a great team effort in bringing back the title to Yorkshire after 62 years. He paid special tribute to Miss Elizabeth Starkie, who was undefeated in all her 15 rubbers on County Week. He commended Mrs. Hann on her "patience, skill, courage and cunning" in leading the team so well.

Mrs. Hann thanked the County President and said they were thrilled to have achieved this success. She referred to the work of her predecessors, particularly Mrs. N. Middleton in the efforts they had made over the years to build up a good team. Now the side they had, though young in years, was by no means lacking in experience of the hazards of County Week. They had made a wonderful effort and had been a credit to the county both on the court and off.

"About Time"

In a witty and light-hearted speech Mr. Reay said he was glad Yorkshire had done something to interrupt the monopoly of the south. As he himself was a native of Durham it was next door to being a Yorkshireman. He went on: "It was about time the title came back to the north and I hope you are going to keep it here."

The seven members of the championship team, who were all present, were Mrs. Valerie Clark, Miss Margaret Cooper, Miss Joyce Fulton, Miss Sally Holdsworth, Mrs. Evelyn Hustwit, Mrs. Elaine Shenton and Miss Elizabeth Starkie.

Mr. Cyril Banks, a vice-president of the L.T.A. and an Hon. Life Vice-President of the Yorkshire L.T.A., and Mrs. Hann, had arranged this enjoyable event on behalf of the County Association.

YORKSHIRE LADIES' FIRST CHAMPIONSHIP WIN IN 1901

When the Yorkshire ladies' team won the Inter-County Grass Court Championship in July, 1963, it was the first time Yorkshire had gained this particular honour for 62 years.

The last occasion Yorkshire ladies were county champions was in 1901. The competition in those days was played on the knock-out principle. Yorkshire and Gloucestershire fought out the final at Leeds in July of that year and the home county won by 7 rubbers to 2, 14 sets to 5, 107 games to 73.

Undoubtedly there is some historic interest in recording the detailed score in that match played so long ago.

Details (Yorkshire names first) : Mrs. Melrose and Miss Peach beat Miss Parr and Miss A. Parr 6-2, 6-3, beat Miss B. Foster and Mrs. A. E. Herapath 6-3, 6-2, beat Miss E. Maldon and Miss Stoddart 5-7, 6-3, 6-1.

Miss E. V. Jessop and Miss B. M. Holder lost to Miss Parr and Miss Parr 2-6, 2-6, beat Miss Foster and Mrs. Herapath 6-2, 6-1, beat Miss Maldon and Miss Stoddart 6-3, 6-2.

Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Bladon lost to Miss Parr and Miss Parr 4-6, 4-6, beat Miss Foster and Mrs. Herapath 6-2, 7-5, beat Miss Maldon and Miss Stoddart 12-10, 6-3.