

## Men's Inter-County Championships on Grass 1992

### GROUP ONE – EASTBOURNE

Yorkshire Squad: Ian Blakeman, Andy Carswell, Mike Harpin, Gary Henderson, Stephen Heron, Richard Hutchinson, Simon Ickringill, Paul Ranson.

Danny Bishop was unavailable for selection this year, and with the late withdrawal of Richard Oades, Mike Harpin made a welcome return to County Week.

Being defending champions is never easy, but we were looking forward to the challenge of being the first ever Yorkshire team to successfully defend the Championships.

#### Monday – Beat Essex 6-3

A new pairing of Gary and Andy made their debut today. The 'hype' and enthusiasm of the American College system seemed to work very well, although the purist might not have enjoyed the lack of rallies. I understand Gary's team talk to Andy at the beginning of the match was "If you can reach it, smack it!"

Simon and Paul, playing at third, put in their usual solid performance, as did Steve and Ian at first pair. Two wins from each couple gave us just the start we wanted.

#### Tuesday – Beat Kent 7-2

Owing to a slight muscle strain, Paul made way for Richard, the other pairings remaining the same.

We were 3-0 up after the first round – Simon and Richard won a three-and-a-quarter hour marathon against Paul Bourdon and Richard Whichello 17-15 in the third.

In the second round Steve and Ian beat the same pair 9-7 in the third – this gave us a winning 5-1 margin. Owing to a severe muscle strain and acute old age, Simon conceded his final rubber.

#### Wednesday – Beat Buckinghamshire 5-4

Our first two pairs remained the same, but Simon was obviously in need of a rest, and quite fancied going to the tea-dance on the pier, so Paul teamed up with Richard at third pair.

This turned out to be our hardest match of the week. Bucks were certainly not playing like a team destined for relegation.

The match stood at 4-4 and set-all with Gary and Andy playing their counterparts of Davidson and Hearn.

We went on to win the final set 6-1. This typified the way that the team has won the 'big sets' and consequently the vital rubbers over the last couple of years.

#### Thursday – Beat Middlesex 6-3

The team remained the same as Simon was still not fit and had in-fact aggravated his injury at the aforementioned tea-dance.

This was a much closer match than the score suggests. Although we were 4-2 up at tea, partly thanks to an outstanding win by Paul and Richard over their first pairs 6-0, 6-2, we were set-all in the three remaining matches.

Eventually Steve and Ian, who had been having a poor time all day, crept home 7-5 in the third to give us a winning margin of 5-3. Paul and Richard also won their remaining rubber, completing a marvellous day for them.

#### Friday – Beat Surrey 6-3

One more win was all we needed. Steve and Ian, however, had started to look a little jaded yesterday, so even though they had had a super week I decided to bring back Simon and leave Steve out.

The match started badly for us. We were 2-0 down, with Simon and Ian also a set down, but once again we won the vital rubber.

From that point we never looked back, taking five of the remaining six rubbers, with Simon and Ian winning all three.

#### Summary

The success of the week was undoubtedly the strength of the squad. There were many different pairings over the week, but the fact that our various third pairs won ten rubbers out of 15 was the difference between us and the other counties.

My thanks to: Mike Harpin for filling in at the last moment; to Simon for his help with selection, and to Pete Greatorex for his invaluable help all year.

Rob Armytage

#### Rubbers Tally

|                       |    |        |    |
|-----------------------|----|--------|----|
| Blakeman/Heron won    | 8  | out of | 12 |
| Carswell/Henderson    | 10 | " "    | 15 |
| Ranson/Hutchinson     | 6  | " "    | 9  |
| Ickringill/Blakeman   | 3  | " "    | 3  |
| Ickringill/Ranson     | 2  | " "    | 3  |
| Ickringill/Hutchinson | 1  | " "    | 3  |