

Devon 18U County Cup Boys Sheffield 2023 Report

Devon 18U Boys were playing in the dizzy heights of Division 2 after gaining a fourth successive promotion last year. The team were in a very strong group with Essex, Yorkshire and the North of Scotland. All the teams' top 5 singles players were Top 100 in the country with a few of the number 1's having played Junior Wimbledon. The boys were up against it after losing four of their 2004's the previous year.

The team travelled to The Graves Tennis Centre in Sheffield on the Thursday 2nd March 2023 and had a great practise and were ready to embrace the challenge. The Devon team consisted of Zac Brown, Jacob Blackler-Rose, Edward Draper, Chris Halse, Parker Calsehu, Oliver Sutton, Alfie Woodger and Lucas Urquiza. On Day 1 we faced Essex (the weakest of the three opposing teams). The boys got off to a good start with a singles win for Lucas at 6! Parker had set points in the first set at number 5 but lost in two tight sets. Chris lost in three sets after a tussle and a great second set winning it 6-4. Ed, Jacob and Zac had very strong opponents and went down with a fight. 5-1 down after singles, we battled in the doubles and the boys gave it everything but we lost all three to lose the tie 8-1. An impressive performance from Ollie in the doubles! Onwards and upwards to North of Scotland on Day 2.

Day 2 began in similar fashion, with a superb win for Lucas at 6 singles. Alfie played a strong number 5 and lost convincingly but put in a great effort. Parker, Ed and Jacob all had tough matches at 4, 3 and 2 and went down fighting. Zac played the number 8 in the country Ben Hudson and was on serve in the first set until Ben stepped it up another level to lose in a hard-fought match. The North were missing their number 1 player too who is number 5 in UK for juniors! We played some great doubles but lost all three again to lose 8-1.

Last day! Day 3 against a very strong Yorkshire team who only lost to the North 5-4! Lucas had a tussle at 6 but lost 6 and 3 in a great match against Alex Tikhonov (who was Yorkshire's number 1 last year)! Similar hard-fought matches for Alfie, Chris, Ed, Jacob and Zac. All losing but putting in a shift. Doubles was tight but we went down and lost the tie 9-0.

The boys showed great professionalism and team support on and off the court all weekend and did Devon enormously proud. Assistant coach Stefan Lupu did an excellent job of coaching, inspiring and motivating the team on and off the court. It has been a long journey for Devon and to get to this level has been a real testament to the county training set-up and the coaching team. It has been a privilege to be part of it. Division 3 next year which will still be nails! We lose Parker, Alfie, Lucas, Zac, Ed and Chris this year (into the Men's hopefully next year). The future depends on the next crop of players coming up being led by Jacob and Ollie. Keep it going Devon!

By Liam Storey

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