

## **MEN'S OVER 65 REPORT 2023**

**Team: Mark Reeves, Nick Smith, Steve Pye, Richard Brown, Ian Marsh**

**Date: 25/98/202**

Summary – A tough season in Group 1 playing against the best in the country will almost certainly see Norfolk relegated but hopefully the experience for new squad members and more settled doubles pairings will help in the future. Nevertheless it was pleasing to see the enthusiasm and commitment of all players which augurs well for the next season. Thank you to all those who made themselves available and participated.

Surrey (Home, 21 May) – The first match of the season was against the reigning age group national champions. It was always going to be a tough affair, not helped by them fielding two top 10 ranked players. The Norfolk team was Mark Reeves, Nick Smith (Capt), Steve Pye, Richard Brown and Ian Marsh (second doubles).

Both singles were lost with Mark picking up 5 games and Nick 3, however the first doubles was the closest of the day with Steve and Richard partnering well and pushing their opponents to a championship tiebreak (losing to 4). In the second round both doubles were lost with a welcome new recruit Ian playing his first representative match (having actually played for Surrey previously for several years).

Overall a 5-0 win for Surrey. Other tough matches were to follow but hopefully this had given the team a good benchmark of the standard at the very top end.

Essex (Away, 12 June) – The second strongest team of Group 1, Essex away was another challenging match. With Mark Reeves unavailable for the rest of the season due to injury saw a reshuffling of the team of Steve Pye, Richard Brown, Nick Smith and Ian Marsh.

Steve, at number 1 singles played well and had a close match and gained momentum as the match progressed. His second set was close but he

eventually went down 6-2 7-5. Similarly Richard, playing his first representative singles match, met a tough, consistent and fit opponent and although acquitting himself well went down 6-2 6-2. The new partnership of Nick and Ian played an experienced doubles pair who were too strong and tactically better and they lost. In the second round Nick and Ian got off to a good start with a tight first set going to a tiebreak but the momentum couldn't be maintained. Steve and Richard also lost their doubles. Overall a 5-0 win for Essex.

Berkshire (Home, 18 July) – With two significant losses to start the season a result against Berkshire was desperately needed.

The team involved an unchanged singles pairing of Steve Pye and Richard Brown with Nick Smith and Mike Hutson (playing down) the doubles team. Two good wins in both singles, Steve saving a match point in the Championship tiebreak to win it 14-12 in a see-saw encounter where he lost the second set 6-0, and Richard being too consistent and outclassing his opponent dropping only 4 games. By contrast the doubles were close encounters however Nick and Mike were the wrong side of two deciding tie break sets to make the match even at 2-2. In the final doubles a strong finish allowed Steve and Richard to come out on top and win the deciding rubber. Overall a 3-2 win for Norfolk.

Kent (Home, 23 July) – The fourth match of the season saw Kent travelling to Norfolk having lost 2 matches and winning 1 – the same as Norfolk. As a measure of the importance of the match to Kent they played as their number 1 singles player, Jasper Cooper, a drop down from his first year in the Over 70s. Jasper, ranked at 16 in the world rankings Over 70 made a huge difference and dropped few games in his two winning rubbers. The Norfolk team was Steve Pye, Richard Brown, Nick Smith and Richard Palmer.

Another good singles performance from Richard, winning another championship tiebreak, saw Norfolk pull a rubber back although Nick and Richard P were edged out in a close 7-5 6-4 contest. Half time score 2-1 to Kent. The second round saw the doubles shared with Steve and Richard B winning in straight sets but Nick and Richard P losing. Overall a 3-2 win for Kent.

Dorset (Away, 11 August) – Final match of the season was away to Dorset played at the impressive West Hants LTC in Bournemouth. With no indoor courts available fingers were crossed but a fine sunny day allowed the use of the grey shale outdoor courts which played well.

The Norfolk team was Steve Pye, Richard Brown, Nick Smith and Ian Marsh. Three very close matches in the first round saw Norfolk frustratingly lose all three on Championship tiebreaks. Perhaps it was the grey shale, perhaps it was the sun and sea air, perhaps it was the travelling but perhaps just unfortunately not winning the right points ! The second round saw rubbers shared with Nick and Ian finishing the season strongly with a solid 6-4 6-1 win over the two singles players. -Overall a 4-1 win for Dorset.

