**SUMMER COUNTY CUP 2019 – MENS TEAM REPORT**

**Suffolk Fight Hard to Achieve 3rd Place in the Country**

After last year’s remarkable title winning campaign, Suffolk men knew they were up against it with 3 of the title winning squad missing. However, Harper Mills came in to support the ever present

Jez Cowley, Matt Hough, Ben Jones, Matt Kirby, Oscar Cutting, James Ling & Ryan Lambert.

Day 1 was a blistering start by Suffolk who won the first 2 rounds 2-1 to have a 4-2 lead with 3 to play. The match was sealed by Hough & Cutting leaving Suffolk with a 5-4 win and dream start over a Middlesex side that had 2 strong pairs.

Day 2 turned out to be the crunch day and survival in the highest division was all but secured with a magnificent victory over a strong Hertfordshire side. Herts' number 1 pair were pushed close by all of our pairs but, unfortunately, they were able to pick up 3/3 victories. However their 3rd pair were soundly beaten which left the tie at 3-3. Jones & Kirby pulled off a great 3 set win against their 2nd's and Hough and Cutting lost to the same pair in a nail biting tight 2 sets which left Cowley & Ling needing to beat them to secure the win. With the tie poised at 4-4 and the deciding match entering a 3rd set the scene was set for a dramatic finale. Cowley & Ling got an early break but that disappeared as quick as it came and the Herts’ 2nd pair were serving for the match at 5-4 up. Some outstanding returning saw Suffolk level the match at 5 games all and then hold serve to force the Herts team to serve to stay in the match. A dramatic finish saw Cowley & Ling break serve to pull off an unlikely 5-4 victory for Suffolk and put them in a strong position for survival - and also distant title hopes.

Kent unfortunately squashed those hopes the next day with a strong performance and this came at a cost to Suffolk who lost Kirby & Cutting to injury (pec & stomach) and Ling was unavailable for the last 2 days. When you work out the maths that left 7 players in the squad with 2 injured....6 are required to play!

South Wales were the Thursday opponents and there was much deliberation on Wednesday night as to how we would put a side together capable of winning. The physios did some great patching up with Kirby and Oscar and, at the request/order of Cowley, they both played an important part in this fixture.

Jones & Hough played together and were awesome in gaining 2 quick wins, Cowley & Cutting struggled to find any rhythm with Oscar unable to serve better than 20% over arm and they were beaten in their first 2 matches. Kirby (serving underarm) & Mills lost both their matches leaving Suffolk 4-2 down with 3 to play. But an inspired substitution and great performance from Lambert & Kirby saw them win their final match before the rain hit (yes Kirby was still serving underarm!) and with Hough & Jones 1 set down and 4-4 in the 2nd set and Cowley & Cutting 1 set up but 5-1 down 2nd set the tie was still balanced in South Wales' favour...just!

Play resumed on Friday morning & Cutting (still unable to serve properly) was inspired off the ground with his returns and he and Cowley gelled fantastically well to take the final set 6-2 and set up a grandstand finish for Jones & Hough who had taken the second set. Relegation was still a possibility for Suffolk should this match end in defeat but as Jones & Hough entered a final set tie-break they took matters into their own hands and sealed an incredible turn around and 5-4 victory.

The match v Essex saw us only field 2 pairs due to the injuries but our job was done and our position of 3rd place had been secured, all of our own doing.

It was an extremely pleasing result and shows just how we have become a part of the furniture in division 1.

"I could not be any prouder of the boys, they put their bodies on the line, pushed their boundaries and gave everything to keep Suffolk in the top division. it is a great privilege to play with such committed players & the future generations can learn a lot from the passion, drive, teamwork and pride that comes from playing for Suffolk"