

## JUNIOR 1<sup>ST</sup> TEAM

The final weekend of the Junior Premier Division was played at Wood Green Academy, Wednesbury during the last weekend in March. Surrey started the weekend in 3<sup>rd</sup> place and had high hopes. However the non-arrival of Joseph Langham-Ferreira left the team's dreams shattered as they were a player short against Lincolnshire and Cleveland. They could not have got off to a worse start as the demoralised team crashed 0-10 to Lincolnshire's Adam Harrison (ranked 4), Tom Jarvis (8), Matthew Leete (25), Olivia Churchill (13) and Grace Patter (33). This greatly helped Lincolnshire into 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

It was a better story against Cleveland. Not surprisingly Shaquille found the going tough as he was promoted to No 2 in the team. He lost comfortably to England No 10 Alec Ward but recovered to beat Joe Clark. Marcus Giles beat Billy Forster in 3 and then Alec Ward in 5 ends. Isabelle Joubelly beat Katie Barlow but found Kayleigh Forster a bit too strong. Rhiannon Folan did as well as Isabelle to help secure a draw. Being a player short proved very costly in this match too.



On Mothers Day it was Jake Mitchell who came to the rescue, braving a Sunday service on the trains. His arrival lifted the team spirit. First match was against Sussex who remained unbeaten to take the Championship. But they had to battle it out against a rejuvenated Surrey. Marcus took the opening set against Josh Bennett. Jake opened his account against Adam Corell by going two games down. Then he pushed the "on" button and he says "for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in 3 years" he reversed the trend to win -6, -5, 6, 8, 8 to give Surrey a 2-0 lead.



Unfortunately Sussex had seriously strong girls! Their No 2 was England No 5 Lois Peake. Their No 1 was England No 3 Yuki Wat! Rhiannon took on Yuki and lost 2-11 but managed to rally round to pinch the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Her recovery was short-lived but a noble effort. Shaquille found that England No 15 Jack Bennett was too good although he too managed to pinch an end. Lois Peake ploughed through Isabelle conceding just 16 points. Jake made his presence felt once again as he took the first game against Josh Bennett. But Josh remained sufficiently composed to win the next 3 games. Rhiannon resisted better against Lois but lost -5, -9, -9. Marcus had a roller-coaster ride with Jack Bennett. It was Jack who stormed the first 11-3 only to lose the next two games. Marcus let his grip slip in the 4<sup>th</sup>, losing it 12-14. Our No 1 trailed for much of the 5<sup>th</sup> but staged a great recovery to win it 11-8 with sheer determination. Isabelle chipped in a good performance against Yuki Wat who seemed erratic. Yuki pinched the set by scores of 9, 10 & 10. The finale of this match was between Adam and Shaquille. The



first two games were shared but Shaquille put his foot on the pedal to win the next two 8 & 1.

The final result was 6-4 to Sussex but Surrey had picked up valuable sets which proved decisive for the final match of the weekend against Yorkshire.



Yorkshire were unlucky to lose their penultimate match to Cleveland with a very close 4-6. This meant that Yorkshire had to beat Surrey 9-1 to avoid relegation and send Surrey down to Div 1. We were not having that! However Yorkshire's team was very similar to that which had won the Cadet Premier Division just 2 months earlier with James Hobson (Eng No 24), Harry Dai (Eng No 1 U13's) Gauri Duhan, and Kate Nixon. They added the talents of James Garrod, ranked 38.

Shaquille took on James Hobson and demonstrated he had no experience against defenders to lose -1, -8, -2! But Shaquille later redeemed himself with a resounding victory over Harry Dai 4, 5, -8, 5. Jake was unable to cope with Harry's serving and, despite winning the 1<sup>st</sup> game, he could not quite handle James Garrod. Marcus had no trouble with James Garrod but nearly lost to James Hobson! The first game saw Marcus 'chopped-off' 9-11. He came thundering back with an 11-2 but then lost the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Worryingly he found himself 8-10 down in the 4<sup>th</sup> but he managed to squeeze out the next 4 points for a decider to be played. In the 5<sup>th</sup> it looked like plain sailing as he secured it 11-5 to conceal a near disaster. Both Isabelle and Rhiannon lost 1-3 to Kate Nixon but they both managed to beat Gauri Duhan to share the points in a 5-5 draw. Surrey were safe for another year. Relief all round as total humiliation was avoided.



Thanks to Steve Giles for ferrying the team around and for doing much of the coaching. Also to Jane Barella who had been busy behind the scenes in finding an emergency reserve. I cannot over-estimate the contribution by Jake Mitchell who put himself out beyond the call of duty.

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