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## 2019 Home Counties League - Surrey v Middlesex Croydon BC – Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019 – 1030hrs

### **SURREY HAND MIDDLESEX HEAVY OPENING DAY LOSS**

Well that certainly did not go to plan! Middlesex opened their 2019 Home Counties League campaign with a trip to Croydon BC to face neighbours Surrey BA.

Croydon has not been a happy hunting ground in recent years but new Team Manager Darren Gosnell and his selectors had named what looked, on paper, to be a strong side. Things started poorly from the off with a number of players arriving later than the requested 1000hrs report, due to parking or transportation issues and one player not arriving at all. This led to last minute changes to the make up of the rinks. Prior to the game Darren gave a rousing team talk, welcoming all the new caps in the process. Amongst other things he emphasised the need to focus on your own individual rink so that the overall result would come as an automatic by product.

The positivity engendered by the new beginning was almost instantly burst with Middlesex 1-12 down after the first end across the green. At 5 ends Middlesex trailed 16-35 and only led on 1 rink. Surrey kept the pressure firmly on over the next 5 ends to lead by 40 at 10 ends. The best Middlesex had at this point was 1 rink level.

Over the next 5 ends Middlesex rallied to trail by only 24 at 15 ends, they also now led on 2 rinks with a 3<sup>rd</sup> tying. Were Middlesex getting to grips with the green which was very tricky in places, were they now getting more used to any new teammates and their playing nuances, were Surrey fading? Well to the last point, unfortunately not, over the next 3 ends across the green Surrey scored double that of Middlesex to go back to 35 in front. Surrey also won the last 3 ends as the heart seemed to go out of the Middlesex fight and they limped home well beaten. The final damage being 93 – 138.

Positively Middlesex did win on 2 rinks to gain 4 points to Surrey's 18. Paul Reynolds (Ladygate), Mark Laws (Ealing Central), Rod Smith (Holtwhites) and Tony Waller (Ladygate) won 19-17 but top rink on count back went to Mark Catchpole and Roger Watkinson (Bush Hill Park), Darren Gosnell and Tommy Brooks (Poplar). There were also some positive performances from some of the newer squad members which bodes well longer term.

In the days other games Defending Champions Kent suffered a perhaps surprise 4-18 loss at home to Sussex BA and Buckinghamshire BA beat Berkshire BA 15-7. This leaves Sussex top of the early table with 36 points.

At least after the poor result there was some non bowls related solace for the players. The rolls on offer from the Croydon caterers were first rate and well worth the cost and the M25 was unusually clear on the journey back home!!

Next up in the league is a home game against Sussex BA at Hendon BC on the 25<sup>th</sup> May, Middlesex need to bounce back and in so doing haul Sussex back into the pack.

Preview later in the week.