



v.

2022 HOME COUNTIES LEAGUE GROUP GAME 1

MIDDLESEX 144 (20) BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 104 (2)

Middlesex made an almost perfect start to their 2022 Home Counties League Campaign as they romped to victory over Buckinghamshire.

The match, which was contested at Ladygate BC, was played in warm weather under a blue sky making it a lovely day for players and spectators alike.

Before the game President Brian Hearn welcomed debutants John Stacey, Andrew Griggs (both Poplar) and Andy Bennett, Mark Smith (both Ashford) and then presented County Badges to Kevin Liffen (Cambridge Park), Luke Mann (Ashford) and Ollie Shearing (North Greenwich)

When play got underway there was the usual cagey start. Ladygate's green was good and firm with no sign of bumps etc but the lines were tricky and players took time to adjust. At 5 ends Middlesex trailed 29-30 but the rink of Ollie Shearing, Kevin Liffen, Norman Worley (Hendon) and Nick Edwards (Bounds Green) had opened an early 10-1 lead.

Middlesex got stronger over the next 5 ends and by halfway they led 71-48 leading on 4 rinks. Nick's rink was now 19-4 ahead and the West Ealing foursome of Rob Green, John Carey, Craig Hill and Barry Wheeler were getting into their stride scoring 12 unanswered shots to lead 15-8.

Over the next batch of 5 ends Middlesex tightened their grip on the game and at 15 ends they led 110-65 and were up on 5 rinks. West Ealing had continued their run and now led 26-9.

It looked like the game was won but how many points would Middlesex secure. At 18 ends Middlesex still led 126-88 but the dynamics in some rinks were changing which could see the points share change dramatically. Dave Thomas (Hendon), Robbie Carter (Poplar), Mark Smith (Ashford) and Tommy Brooks (Poplar) lost 4 over the 3 ends and now only led by 2 but Kevin Hill (Hendon), Roger Watkinson (Broomfield), Steve Boyle (Bush Hill Park) and Paul Cater (West Ealing) picked up 8 to lead by 3.

Over the final 3 ends Tommy Brook's rink picked up 4 to secure a 22-17 win, John Stacey, Andrew Griggs, Will Allen and Scott Reading (all Poplar) won their last 5 ends, scoring 9 to win 21-10; Luke Mann Martin Payne, Andy Bennett and Matt Larman (all Ashford) cruised home 23-14 and Barry Wheeler's West Ealing quartet secured top rink wining 32-17.

So, 18 points secured but the drama was on the remaining 2 rinks. Nick Edwards's quartet who had led 21-4 at 11 ends went into the final end 22 all. Superb bowls from Norman and Nick saw Middlesex score 3 and secure the rink.

All down to the final rink to finish and Paul Cater went into it 21-19 up. With one bowl to come they held shot and the Bucks skip only had a draw for one or a bare jack trail. With nothing to lose he played for the bare jack, got it clean and picked up 5 as his reward!

So, 5 rink wins, 20 points and a plus 40 shot difference, couldn't really have asked for more.

In the days other game Hampshire beat Kent 18-4 at Bromley. In Group 1, Oxford beat Sussex 19-3 and Berks won 20-2 at Surrey.

So next Saturday 28th May Middlesex head South to Eastleigh to take on Hampshire whilst Bucks host Kent at Gerrards Cross. In Group 1 Oxfordshire travel to Berks and Sussex host Surrey on the coast at Worthing.

Full preview of Middlesex game later in week.