

Championship Managers Report

At long last Chiltern won the Championship first division title after four frustrating years as runners up. This was the closest battle ever with three regions being separated by just one game after 12 rounds of fierce competition. We prevailed due to a very healthy point's difference over our traditional rivals Kent with London region recording an excellent third spot just one game behind.

The competition started at 8.30 on Saturday morning with our first match against newly promoted Eastern Region and resulted in an emphatic 8-0 win with 104 points against 41. Our next match was against the other promoted team, the Isle of Wight. and again it was a one sided affair and a 7-1 win. We then faced a tough Northern team, whom we defeated 5-3 and the last match on Saturday morning resulted in a 6-2 win against Heart of England.

26 wins and just 6 defeats in 4 rounds would normally have given us a healthy lead but it became obvious, even at this early stage, that it would be a tight affair with the top 4 slugging it out blow for blow. At this stage Kent and London also had 26 wins with defending champions Southern just behind on 23.

The first match on Saturday afternoon saw us paired with Kent and a narrow 5-3 win resulted. We then played the surprise package of the weekend, London region and suffered our first defeat of the weekend, going down 3-5. The last match of the day saw us beat Southern region by 5 games to 3 although it looked a lot better than that at one stage with us being 5-0 up.

The end of the first day saw us in the lead with 39 wins with London in second place on 37, Kent in third place also with 37 and Southern fourth on 26. The positions at this stage are critical as they determine the Sunday opponents. This gave Kent and Southern the advantage in drawing the bottom two teams (Eastern and Heart of England) while London and ourselves facing the stronger Isle of Wight and Northern regions.

A bright but chilly Sunday morning started with a 6-2 win against Isle of Wight but, at the same time, Kent wiped out our overnight lead beating Eastern 8-0 and London drew within 1 win by beating Northern 7-1. The second match on Sunday, against Northern, gave us a great win by 7 games to 1 and a massive point's difference of plus 60 which was to prove decisive. Then followed a 6-2 win against Southern, and, with London and Kent splitting their round 4-4 things looked set fair for a Chiltern win.

The Sunday afternoon games started late due to a medical emergency and a disappointing 2-6 defeat to Kent put everything back into the melting pot.

The last round of matches began with London on 61 wins and Chiltern and Kent on 60. If we defeated London we were guaranteed second spot. At 4-1 up we learned that Kent had won their match 5-3 which meant that we needed two more wins to make certain of victory although our superior points lead over Kent meant that 1 more win would probably do it. Our team 5 of Adrian, Myra and Peter obliged. We lost the other 2 matches in the round which meant that it would all come down to points difference, in which, if my maths were correct, we would prevail.

In the end we had a better point's difference of over 60 which secured our first championship title for 5 years.

As usual. I have nothing but praise for all the players in the team who supported each other and showed the now famous Chiltern spirit that got us over the line after a disastrous eleventh round which would have disheartened any other squad.

I would like to congratulate our Challenge Squad, which won the First division by a convincing margin and gave us the double for the first time since 2008. Also well done to the junior squad which again did us proud.

Many congratulations also to Sophiane who won the Champion of Champions shooting competition and to Sean who finished runner up, and to all the Chiltern players who received awards in the presentation, it seemed that nearly every player who collected a trophy had a Chiltern shirt on!

All in all a great weekend for the mighty Lions!

Well done to all.

Alan Roden – Chiltern Championship Team Manager

P.S.

A great weekend of Petanque as usual but this year tinged with sadness. The tragic loss of Chris Best from Northern Region due to a heart attack left many people in a state of shock that permeated throughout the site and the first round after lunch on Sunday, usually an exciting and tense time, was very sombre. I did not know Chris very well but she was a very popular national figure and her loss, during the annual celebration of our sport, affected a great number of people including many from our region.