

Round 9: Team Chichester v Bristol (29/3/16)

Round 9 was the penultimate round of the PSL season and semi-final places beckoned. Team Chichester currently in 3rd place (on 114 points) played UWE/Elite Squash Bristol also on 114 points and in 4th place. It was all to play for and the crystal ball predicted a loss for the home team but, Team Chichester was determined to win and take a step closer to the play-offs.

Chichester's Robbie Temple is the player everyone dreads to play. His ability to switch hands, at will, makes him the best ambidextrous player in the world. Temple didn't waste any time and in straight games, in 37 minutes, defeated Mike Harris. Harris did fight back in the third but Temple resolutely played through to put Chichester 1.0 up.

Meanwhile, on the adjacent court, Lauren Briggs [Chichester] played WR24 and 2016 Welsh National Champion, Tesni Evans. It proved to be a great match as Briggs hit great length and width to peg Evans back and win the first game 11/5. Unfortunately Briggs got off to a bad start in the second and never really recovered; her width of shot was not tight enough which allowed Evans to pick off the balls and win the game 5/11. In the third it was more of the same and the winning 5/11 score was repeated. The fourth game proved to be a 'battle royale' as Briggs re-established her grasp on the match. She steadfastly battled her way to 10/7 and had several game balls which Evans decisively saved until she reached her first match point. Evans immediately converted the point to win 13/15 to put Bristol on the scorecard.

Paul Coll played Bristol's Tom Ford in what turned out to be quite a disjointed match as Ford continually tried to break it up. Ford took the first game 7/11 before Coll's dogged determination to retrieve everything and anything enabled him to take control of the match. He had the upper hand in the next three games to win the match 11/5, 11/5, 11/9.

Chichester's Kyle Finch, meanwhile, took on Bristol's David Haley and a brutal match ensued. Haley was hitting great lengths and intercepting Finch's cross court shots and ran away with the first game 6/11. Finch nonetheless struck back immediately to take the second 11/7. The third game was very tight and Haley reached game ball first but Finch battled his way through to win 13/11. Finch was getting stronger and was now in full flow; he wrapped up the final game 11/3 to give Chichester a 3.1 winning margin.

In the final match Adrian Waller faced WR11 Marwan Elshorbagy and although it was a dead rubber match there were still points to be won to keep Team Chichester in the race for the play-offs. Waller was straight out of the blocks to seize the initiative and he pressed forward to take the first 11/7. Shorbagy instantly turned the tables to take the next 9/11. Waller was, however, undaunted and forged his way through the third to take it 14/12. It was nip and tuck in the fourth with Elshorbagy easing his way to 5/11. It was once again down to the wire! The game was played in great spirit, with great sportsmanship from both players. The game went to 10 all, Waller had several match points but was unable to convert them; Elshorbagy finally managed to grasp the fifth 13/15.

Chichester reversed the Crystal Ball prediction with a 3-2 victory. Team Chichester visits St. George's Hill in the final round of the PSL on the 19th April where the final places for the semi-finals will be decided.

Mike Phillips – Team Manager

