

SUSSEX RETAIN NATIONAL UNDER-11 INTER-COUNTY TITLE

The Sussex Under-11 Boys' Team was once again crowned National Champions, as they beat old adversaries Kent, in a most exciting finale to Saturday's England Squash Inter-County Festival in Manchester, thus retaining the title won so commandingly last year. With the **Boys' Second Team securing thirteenth** (out of twenty-one) and the **Girls winning their final match to finish eighth**, it was well worth making the long trip north to the National Centre, and came at the end of a very long day's competition.

The **Sussex 1st Team of Jake Sim-Baskar, Xiang Cheung, and Thomas Welch**, looked after by Graham Stevenson, simply grew in stature and confidence as the day progressed, beating Lincolnshire, Worcestershire and Durham and Cleveland in the round-robin stage, to set-up a semi-final clash with eternal rivals Yorkshire – Jake was an inspiring captain, summoning his considerable skills, to show just why he is currently ranked number four in the country, and winning all his matches with some authority, but it was his less experienced team-mates, Xiang and Thomas, who excelled to secure the necessary victories – Xiang was simply too strong and solid for his opponents, and Thomas used his lovely racket-control to great effect, slotting-in winning drops from all over the court, not least when winning from three match-balls down against Durham & Cleveland! Yorkshire were beaten 2/1, with Jake maintaining his unbeaten record, and Xiang coping admirably with the pressure of playing the decider, to earn a Final place, and suddenly, the dream of victory seemed possible! Thomas got Sussex off to a fine start, with an assured 2/0 win, and when Jake then held his nerve to beat Kent's Jude Gibbins, ranked only one place below him nationally, Sussex were champions again, and deservedly so!

That this was a completely different line-up of players to last year made a wonderful success all the sweeter, and it's to be hoped that everyone in the Sussex 'team', be they players, coaches, parents or supporters is very proud of their contribution.

The **Boys' 2nd Team gave Zack Greengrass, George Haig, and newcomer Charlie Stewart** a great opportunity to gain valuable experience, and **Team Manager Rob Greengrass** guided them splendidly to two impressive victories, whilst the **Girls, Poppy Wiles, Grace Winton, and another newcomer, Ruby Chandler**, quickly gelled into a lovely team under **Zoe Shardlow's** expert supervision, competing gamely throughout against a number of more experienced and older opponents, and finally scoring a well-deserved victory against Merseyside.

Brilliant day, wonderful success, great effort from everyone who made it happen!

Many Thanks + Well Done,

Graham (Stevenson)

