

G.S. Squash

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G.S. Squash Under-11 Inter-County Festival 2017

SUSSEX ADD TO THEIR NATIONAL U-11 TITLE!

When this year's G.S. Squash Under-11 Inter-County Festival took place at Bluecoats last Sunday, the Sussex 'A' Team were undoubted favourites to ensure the Trophy stayed in Sussex, having been so recently crowned National U-11 Champions, but national finalists Kent were all out for 'revenge', so it was always going to be close – and so it proved! Unlike the Manchester Event, which involved teams of three players only, this format was a full team of five players, plus a reserve.

Sussex had two teams competing:

Sussex 'A' - 1. Jake Sim-Baskar (Captain) 2. Xiang Cheung 3. Thomas Welch 4. Calum Porter 5. Zack Greengrass 6. Charlie Stewart, managed by Rob Greengrass.

Sussex 'B' - 1. George Haig (Captain) 2. George Powell 3. Poppy Wiles 4. Stanley Dolan 5. Grace Winton 6. Izzy Hutton 7. Ruby Chandler, managed by Kit Pearman.

Sussex were joined on the day by Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Kent, Oxfordshire, and Surrey, with the eight counties arranged into a two-league 'round-robin', followed by X-over play-offs, and Final play-offs to establish the order of merit. The Sussex 1st Team duly won their league, only dropping one match, in the tie against Surrey, whilst Kent were similarly dominant in their league. The Sussex 'B' Team fought determinedly throughout a very testing day, against largely older and more experienced opponents, but there were wins for Izzy Hutton and Grace Winton, and great credit to George Haig, who battled gallantly with all the opposing Number 1's; George Powell competed gamely throughout, as did Stanley Dolan, making his Sussex debut, whilst Poppy Wiles enjoyed taking on the Boys, and Ruby Chandler showed how much she learned in Manchester. Meanwhile, Sussex 'A' and Kent reached the Final 1st/2nd Play-off without serious threat, and so an epic final began ...

When the Kent No. 3, Freddy Miles, showed great composure – not to mention lovely sportsmanship in helping his opponent to 're-group' after an unfortunate tumble - to win a final game tie-break against his Sussex counterpart, Thomas Welch (hero of the Manchester National triumph), everyone knew the tie was balanced on a knife-edge!

Fortunately, Sussex No.1 and Captain, Jake Sim-Baskar, was next on court, and was at his imperious (National No. 4) best, in yet again despatching a very disappointed Jude Gibbins in straight games, but on the adjacent court, seven year old Zack Greengrass was having an incredible tussle at fifth string against Ayaan Ratnayaka, his amazing tenacity eventually over-turning a first game loss, and an age/size disadvantage, to win a nail-biting encounter 14/12 in the final game, having saved two match-balls, which if lost, would in fact have cost Sussex the title! If only he hadn't lost his composure in the process, this was definitely a 'man of the match' performance. The sigh of relief was almost audible, as Calum Porter was a so-solid victor at fourth string, which meant that Sussex were champions again, even though Xiang Cheung again failed to get the better of Kent's impressive Dylan Reynolds at No.2. The Sussex 'B' Team, predictably as the only second team entered, did finish in last position, but under Kit Pearman's expert guidance, they are all better for the challenge.

Graham Stevenson then rounded-off a long and busy day, presenting an engraved medallion to all the players, thanking the Bluecoats' Management for providing the splendid venue once again, and congratulating Issy Boyle and Jamie Greengrass for their brilliant assistance in running the event.

With great simultaneous success for the Ladies' and Men's Teams elsewhere, it was another glorious day for Sussex Squash.

Graham Stevenson