

ICC Update - Squash

Wiltshire entered teams in the seniors, o45's and over 60's age groups plus a team in the squash 57 (was this an age group thing), this was the first year they were trialling playing at more centralised locations.

In the seniors Wiltshire could only field 4 players for the two matches on Saturday, Calli, Nigel, Simon and James, losing both matches 5/0 against Bedfordshire and and Norfolk. In the final match on Sunday Wiltshire were upto 5 players thanks to two new recruits from Salisbury Nick Brown and Rob Willway, but no Nigel, playing against Avon. Calli winning the only match for Wiltshire 3/2 against Sam Barham.

Wiltshire not progressing to the promotion play-offs

In the over 45s Wiltshire faced Hampshire and Oxfordshire in a group of 3 due to the withdrawal of Middlesex. And due to injuries and late withdrawals Wiltshire were down to 4 players against Hampshire, Damien Smith winning his match, Alex, Nev and Ed losing theirs. For the second match Wiltshire were down to 3 players, with Ed winning his match 3/1 Nev and Alex losing both of theirs. However the Oxfordshire result was overturned for playing non registered players. Wiltshire therefore ending up second.

In the over 60s Very unfortunately, Wiltshire were not able to take part in the Inter-Counties. There were a number of reasons for this. Despite entering (and getting confirmation of so from ES) in Oct 2018, on 29/01/2019 ES informed me that only our seniors were taking part, a matter that was eventually sorted out, but ES then failed to communicate anything about the March event (venue, schedule etc) until very close to the time (nothing on web site either). As a result it went down my list of priorities, the end result being that I had to try to get a team at short notice. Gary P had cracked his ribs, and no other competitive players were available, which left just me, so I was forced to pull the side out. All in all it was very frustrating and, to me, emphasised again that there is a lack of organisation and basic competence at ES.

In summary we only managed in one match to field a complete team in one match

Racketball

Wiltshire entered a team for the inaugural Inter-county Cup racketball competition; the first time racketball has made it onto the county competition roster. There were 3 categories: an open, over 50's and a women's category. Wiltshire entered a team into the open category despite fielding a squad with limited racketball experience.

The Saturday started with a very early departure from Swindon for Adam Giles, Calli Smith, Dan Burns and Nev Buckle and they battled through the chaos of the M1 to arrive half an hour late and meet their fifth player Rory Birtwhistle at the Nottingham club. First match against Devon who were fielding a super strong team with many seasoned racketball players. One particular highlight was watching Rory warm up and hit his first straight forehand drive and watch his eyes widen as the ball hit midway up the backwall. Yes, Rory hadn't played much racketball before! Needless to say, they all had a racketball lesson with Devon pulling off a wide variety of sublime racketball-only shots bamboozling Wilts and beat 3-0 in each string. Devon would go on to comfortably win the competition.

Wiltshire's second match against Essex was a slightly more competitive affair. Nev Buckle lost to the seasoned player Pascual Dibattista 3-0, Adam Giles lost 3-0 to the talented, young Joe Blackmur and Calli Smith lost 3-0 to Dan 'I can hit the ball harder than you' Weights. Dan Burns had a good match against Ryan Cochrane losing 3-1 in a close game and Rory Birtwhistle, playing only his second competitive match, overcame the stylish Adam Grilli 3-1. Rory will be quite the handful when gets some practice in! Match lost 4-1.

The Sunday saw Wilts in the first round of the plate competition against Lincolnshire who could only field 3 players. Calli had a really close game against Nigel Truman narrowly losing 3-2 (8/11) in the fifth. Next on was Dan who won the first game in a tight 12/10 but lost the next 3. Therefore, the match was going to be decided on Nev playing at string 3 (Adam was unavailable that early in the morning). His opponent was the talented youngster Louie Truman, 11 years old but looked even younger! Not sure what Nev was drinking the night before but he lost the first game 11-8 and looked rather green around the gills. However, a couple of pints of water later, Nev soon started to gain control of the match and took the next 3 games to silence the growing crowd.

The plate semi final saw Wilts matched against their neighbours and local rivals, Oxfordshire. Despite Oxfordshire fielding a slightly weaker team than the day before, they still had some talented players. Nev lost 3-0 in a tight game against Darren Rix (10/12, 7/11, 9/11) and Dan lost 3-0 against the talented Jason Varrie. Gary Preston replaced Rory and had a good game against Mark Webster but obviously still suffering from an injury, Gary lost 3-0. Calli lost 3-0 to the seasoned racketballer Mike Edwards 3-0 but Adam pulled off a great victory against Nick Harbour beating the talented Nottingham Uni student 3-2. Oxfordshire eventually went on to win the plate against Yorkshire.

It was clear that racketball was the winner this weekend and Wiltshire hope to get some training in and give a better account of themselves next year.