

Yorkshire Men — Prudential County Cup

INTER-COUNTY GRASS COURT CHAMPIONSHIPS 1988 GROUP ONE, EASTBOURNE

Team: Simon Ickringill, Gary Henderson, Phil Brook, Stephen Heron, Ian Blakeman, David Hirst, Andy Hutchinson, Daniel Bishop.

Yorkshire's two new players were Ian Blakeman — available because of a birth qualification — and Daniel Bishop. Both had played in most of the friendlies, Ian pairing with David Hirst. Of last year's team, Nigel Garton had opted to play for Durham and Cleveland, and Geoff Newton was omitted.

Lost to Kent 5-4

Simon and Gary had a very good day, winning all three rubbers. David and Ian played well, but could only manage one win. Stephen and Phil, arguably our best pair over the previous three years, had a day to forget, losing all three.

Beat Buckinghamshire 8-1

I decided to bring Daniel in for Phil. Stephen and Daniel won two rubbers and looked a very good pair. Simon and Gary again won all three, as did David and Ian. This was a fine all-round team performance, and I didn't need to change the team for the remainder of the week.

Beat Lancashire 7-2

Simon and Gary lost two (the only two they were to lose all week), but such was the team strength overall that we won 7-2. Stephen and Daniel, in particular, were outstanding, and only lost nine games all day.

Beat East of Scotland 9-0

We were rained off on the Thursday after the completion of the first round when we were leading 3-0. After heavy overnight rain, we didn't resume until Friday afternoon. However, the team did not take long to complete the rout. This meant that if we could beat Essex in the final match on Saturday we would be champions for the first time since 1967.

Beat Essex 7-2

The grass courts were not fit, so we had to move indoors to the Ball Park — where we had played so badly last year. The pressure on the indoor courts meant we had to wait until 4.30 pm to establish a winning 5-1 lead. This came when Daniel and Stephen beat John Marnoch and Neil Rayner 6-4, 6-3. We duly achieved a 7-2 victory and became champions for only the third time in the county's history.

Summary

My thanks go to the Leeds Permanent Building Society, who provided the sponsorship which enabled us to play friendly matches all over the country. Their funds also helped us hold indoor practices in Yorkshire the week prior to County Week.

However, obviously my main thanks go to the players. I have been trying to win County Week for 21 years as a player or non-playing captain: Each year we would say "Not to worry, we had a few laughs and we competed". This year we had a few laughs, we competed and we won.

For his first County Week, Daniel proved himself a good doubles player. Ian came in and formed a good partnership with David. Ian was the "Court Jester", which helped with team spirit. For so long, Simon had been the outstanding player in the team and helped us to maintain our position in Group One, and I was pleased he was on a winning team at last.

Thanks also to our full timers Gary and Stephen for fitting County Week into their busy schedules. It is nice to see people who are prepared to give up a week to play for their county. Thanks David for flying back from Germany and taking two weeks off work — one for practice, one for County Week.

Andy Hutchinson and Phil Brook also deserve thanks for being good reserves, and never putting me under any pressure to play them, but being there for every ball that was hit.

Rob Armytage

RUBBERS WON

Henderson and Ickringill	Played 15, won 13
Blakeman and Hirst	Played 15, won 12
Bishop and Heron	Played 12, won 10