

Match report: Team Chichester V St. George's Hill 18/3/14

Team Chichester played its final home match, and eagerly anticipated, clash against Luxfords St. George's Hill, Weybridge. The teams are currently fourth and third respectively in the PSL Group B league and both teams could still be in with an outside shot at the semi-finals. Many of the teams throughout the league were missing their top players [the men at the World Series Finals in Virginia, the women at the Worlds in Penang]; the strength in depth of many of the squads would be a crucial factor. The line-up at Chichester provided some interesting 'match-ups' and the result could go either way – Kemp v Richards, Hedrick v Lee, Pett v Mustonen with Chichester's own Steve Wykes making his debut against Charles Sharpes (WR63). There was also the promise of a battle between former world ranked 18s, Lauren Briggs [CHI] and former Team Chichester player Dominique Lloyd-Walter.

First on the glass-back championship court, Olly Pett played Henrick Mustonen who is ranked well inside the world's top 40 whilst, on the adjacent court, Lauren played Dominique.

Pett and Mustonen started out cautiously with both players checking out each other's game. Pett nudged a couple of points ahead to close out the first 11/8. The second was nip and tuck throughout but Pett kept his composure to seal it 12/10 to go 2.0 up.

Meanwhile Lauren and Dominique were having a cracking opening game on the next court. Lauren snatched the first 11/8 and in the second there was nothing between them and both had game points before Lauren closed it out 16/14 to go 2.0 up.

Pett and Mustonen continued in the same vein in the third but Pett was unyielding; he was always in front and finally took the match 11/8 to put Chichester 1.0 ahead.

Lauren, however, was having a tighter game in the 3rd which eventually went to a tie break. Lauren resolutely battled her way through to win it 12/10 for a great 3.0 victory. Team Chichester was now 2 up.

Next on the glass-back court Rex Hedrick WR60 faced St George's Hill's Joe Lee who is WR31. The first game started and continued throughout to be an attritional affair; nip and tuck all the way until Lee stole it 9/11

At the same time Steve Wykes was making his home debut for Team Chichester against Charles Sharpes WR68. Wykes was matching Sharpes stroke for stroke in the rallies but not quite winning the points. Nonetheless he steadfastly continued to battle throughout the match. The score 2/11, 6/11, 5/11 reflected the difference in class but the talented Wykes' shot-making was a marvel to watch.

2.1 to Chichester

Back on the glass back Hedrick and Lee continued their 'battle royale' but gradually Lee was edging control. His game was slightly tighter forcing Hedrick to play loose shots which, in time, Lee converted to points and he was able to take the second 6/11. At 0.2 down Hedrick now had a mountain to climb in order to get back into the match. There was more of the same in the third but midway through the game Lee made some uncharacteristic errors and Hedrick took full advantage to move ahead. There was great retrieving by both players but finally Hedrick took the game 11/8. He was still in with a shot. In the fourth, Lee started well and built up an early 0/4 lead. Hedrick battled hard but try as he might he was always playing catch up. It was a good honest hard fought match but Lee closed it out 6/11.

2 – all

Down to the wire with Jon Kemp (WR47) against Tom Richards (WR28) to decide the overall match result. This match started out as a bit of a JK master class with great holdings and nicks combined with some great lengths to surge to an 11/4 win for Kemp. The second game saw more of the same with Richards gradually get more into the game but, it was not enough. Kemp was still dictating and he won through 11/6 to keep things looking good for Team Chichester.

In the third Richards clawed himself back into the match making it very close all the way to the tie break. There was great retrieving and superb drops, with Richards 'nicking' it 11/13 to keep St. George's in the running. The fourth was a fantastic display of squash for the packed gallery. Both players were now playing at the top of their games but the difference proved to be Kemp's holding ability. He finally took the game 12/10 and sealed the match for Chichester.

Will it be enough? Whether it's too late remains to be seen, but the final match away to Exeter will be crucial. A fantastic series of home matches this season; the supporters must be extremely pleased. Whatever happens, Team Chichester is moving in the right direction and next season's home ties beckon already.

Team Chichester

Jonathan Kemp	11/4, 11/8, 11/13, 12/10
Rex Hedrick	9/11, 6/11, 11/8, 6/11
Olly Pett	11/8, 12/10, 11/8
Steve Wykes	2/11, 6/11, 5/11
Lauren Briggs	11/6, 16/14, 12/10

St George's Hill

Tom Richards
Joe Lee
Henrick Mustonen
Charles Sharpes
Dominique Lloyd-Walter

Mike Phillips – Team Manager

