

Success for Sussex County Junior Squash at the National County Finals 2018

The wonderful 2017 achievement of winning the Girls' U-19 and the Boys' Under-11 titles was a tough target to match, let alone exceed, but the 2018 Junior Inter-County Campaign turned out to be an even greater triumph, with the **Sussex Under-19 Boys, Under-17 Boys, and Under-13 Boys all becoming National Champions!** In addition, the Under-11 Girls finishing fourth, and the Under-15 Girls making the Trophy Finals, meant there was certainly a fantastic Sussex presence, when the Finals were held amidst the impressive new facilities of the David Ross Sports Village, at Nottingham University.

This season's climax to the competition saw a different format operated, whereby the younger age-groups played their semi-final and final on the Saturday, whilst the senior teams competed on the Sunday. This meant that the **Under-11 Girls** were in action first, and the spirited team of Grace Winton (Captain), Isabella Hutton, and Jaime Killian battled well in losing their semifinal 3/0, against a very strong Lancashire team, who were destined to go on to become most convincing champions.

Next up were the **Boys' Under-13's**, led inspiringly by newly crowned British Junior Open Champion, Jonah Bryant, featuring a strength in depth which must have been viewed ominously by the opposing teams, and which resulted in a very comfortable 5/0 win against Hampshire, and a swift passage to the final, Jonah, Tom Greengrass, Bailey Malik, Heston Malik, Jake Sim-Baskar, and Xiang Cheung never being seriously troubled, so Assistant Manager/Coach, Sumner Malik's advice was barely needed! The **Under-11 Girls** then played Yorkshire in their **3rd/4th Play-off**, and featured another lively performance, which led to an impressive and deserved win for Izzy Hutton, but with Grace Winton and Jaime Killian just coming up short, the Girls had to settle for fourth place, which was a great bonus considering they hadn't expected to be there at all, progress being as best runners-up in Stage 2. There is no doubt that this valuable experience will equip them well for the future.

And so to the **Boys' Under-13 Final**, which matched Sussex with eternal rivals, Yorkshire. With Jonah Bryant to come at Number 1, it was obvious that a good start from Jake Sim-Baskar at Number 5 would put enormous pressure on the Yorkshire players, and he was magnificent, coping maturely with a little 'wobble' midway through the first game, to win it securely, and run out a 3/0 winner – the Under-13's were rolling! When Heston and Bailey Malik then produced the most assured squash anyone could have asked of them, to both win 3/0, Sussex were able to celebrate being champions, even before Jonah and Tom Greengrass completed the 5/0 victory, leaving poor Xiang Cheung, an unbelievably strong player to be a reserve, to reflect that life can be tough, but what an Under-13 team squad – probably the strongest ever!

Sunday saw the **Under-17 Boys** in action first, in their semi-final against Buckinghamshire, and even though all the matches were scheduled on a single court, once Joss Sim-Baskar had won convincingly in the opening match, it didn't take too long for the team of Perry Malik (Captain), Luke Credland, Louie Martin, and Noah Meredith, to establish their place in the final, with a fine 5/0 victory, which never looked in doubt. The **Under-19 Boys** followed, with a strong-looking Warwickshire side standing between them and a final place, but it has to be remembered, this Sussex team was exactly the one which won the U-17 title so magnificently two years ago, and so nothing short of ultimate victory was anticipated. Will Rowe had to work very hard at 5th string, but once he had ground out a 3/1 win, the momentum picked-up rapidly, so that by the time that British National U-19 Champion, Tom Walsh, took to the court for the first string battle, Sussex were already assured of a final place, with a 3/0 victory for Josh Attwell and a four game success for Lucas Hughes, so Tom and Curtis Malik were not called upon to play a crucial part, staying reassuringly fresh for the Final showdown. So, team manager/coaches Graham Stevenson and Ben Hutton braced themselves, in anticipation of two demanding and simultaneous finals, in which the Under-17's had to overcome Warwickshire, as expected, whilst the Under-19's faced yet another battle with Yorkshire, who were able to field National Under-19 runner-up, Nick Wall, and British Open Under-15 champion, Sam Todd.

Over at The Nottingham Squash Club, the **Under-15 Girls** were competing in the National Trophy Finals, but alas, they suffered an unfortunate combination of misfortunes that even esteemed Team Manager Zoe Shardlow couldn't overcome, and although Torrie Malik and Anje Bryant were undefeated at first and second string, they just couldn't attain that vital third win, and so finished what was a disappointing fourth place for a team with great potential, Laura Page, Katalin Johns, and Olivia Wiles all having made such good progress this season. Back to the David Ross Village, and the Under-19 and 17 Finals...

Frankie Smith came into the **Under-17** side for the Final, and provided a great start, with a polished demonstration of assured matchplay, for a 3/0 victory to put Sussex ahead. Meanwhile, Josh Attwell was engaged in a tense and crucial **Under-19** encounter with Sam Todd, his extra reach and strength eventually seeing him home for a 3/1 win after two tense tiebreaks. A good start for Sussex in both matches, but considerably more tension was to come ... Next on court for the Under-17's was Louie Martin, and after four tie-break games of immense excitement, a series of brilliant winners grabbed a vital 3/1 win, to put Sussex 2/1 up in the tie, with Noah Meredith now provided with the opportunity to secure the title. Meanwhile, Tom Walsh was reliving his British Final against the formidable Nick Wall in the U-19's, and after a good start, a few errors cost him the second game, but his amazing resilience and experience saw him bounce back for a hard-earned 3/1 victory, so with Julian Standish winning by a similar margin on the other court, Sussex were Under-19 Champions, with two matches still to play. Hardly had the euphoria died down, when Noah Meredith closed out his Under-17 decider 3/0, having produced a most convincingly mature performance just when it really mattered, and Sussex were Under-17 Champions too, with Perry Malik and Luke Credland still to play! They both duly won, as did Curtis Malik in the final Under-19 rubber, and although Lucas Hughes went down 3/1, there was everything to celebrate, on a Triple Title Quest seen to fruition on a great day for Sussex Squash. **Boys' National Champions at Under-19, Under-17, and Under-13 level.**

A deserved triumph for a harmonious group of talented and committed players, who were a pleasure to work with, supported by similarly enthused parents, and overseen by a wonderfully cohesive coaching and management team – long may it last. And just when we all thought it couldn't get any better, the feedback from Andy Pilling, the England Squash Organiser, complimented Sussex on the politeness of the players, who were “an absolute credit to your county”, as well as the supportive attitude of all involved – proof, if it were needed, that ‘nice guys’ can be ultimately successful, as long as the competitive spirit is under control, and focused in the right direction!

It was also the end of an era, with Tom Walsh, Curtis Malik, Josh Attwell and Jazz Hutton all set to move into the Senior ranks, so we wish them continued success and good luck with that exciting challenge, and thank them for their wonderful service and inspiration to Sussex Junior Squash over the last decade.

Graham Stevenson

22.01.18

RESULTS

U-13 Boys' Final – Yorkshire v Sussex 0/5

1 Alec Tomlinson 1-1 **Jonah Bryant** 0 3 2/11 4/11 4/11
2 Joseph Royle 1-2 **Tom Greengrass** 1 3 7/11 9/11 13/116/11
3 Ben Flower 1-3 **Bailey Malik** 0 3 5/11 6/11 4/11
4 Akashdeep Singh Nahal 1-4 **Heston Malik** 0 3 7/11 4/11 3/11
5 Dominic Cox 1-5 **Jake Sim-Baskar** 0 3 9/11 3/11 9/11

Under-17 Boys' Final – Sussex v Warwickshire 5/0

2 **Luke Credland** 1-2 Alhassan Khalil 3 0 12/10 11/9 11/9
1 **Perry Malik** 1-1 Lewis Anderson 3 0 11/5 11/9 11/9
3 **Louie Martin** 1-3 Daniel Haggarty 3 1 12/14 14/12 13/11 17/15
4 **Noah Meredith** 1-4 Declan Bradley 3 0 11/8 11/9 11/2
5 **Franklyn Smith** 1-5 Zach Marshall 3 0 12/10 11/5 11/7

Under-19 Boys' Final – Sussex v Yorkshire 4/1

1 **Tom Walsh** 1-1 Nicholas Wall 3 1 11/8 8/11 11/411/9
2 **Curtis Malik** 1-2 Elliot Ridge 3 0 11/7 11/7 11/9
3 **Josh Attwell** 1-3 Sam Todd 3 1 11/6 11/5 10/1212/10
5 **Julian Standish** 1-5 Joseph Twigge 3 1 11/9 8/11 11/6 11/8
4 Lucas Hughes 1-4 **Ben Merchant** 1 3 8/11 11/6 10/121/11

Under-11 Girls 3rd/4th Play-off – Sussex v Yorkshire 1/2

-1 Grace Winton 1-1 **Niamh Brennan** 1 3 12/10 9/11 9/1111/13
-2 Isabella Hutton 1-2 **Tolisha Warnakulasooriya** 3 1

3 Jamie Killian 1-3 **Jaspreet Kaur Nahal** 0 3 3/11 4/11 6/11



U13s squad Jonah Bryant, Xiang Cheung, Jake Sim-Baskar Thomas Greengrass, Heston Malik, Sumner Malik (Team Manager) and Bailey Malik,



U17s squad Noah Meredith, Luke Credland, Louie Martin, Frankie Smith, Joss Sim-Baskar; Perry Malik, (Jamie Greengrass, Matt North and Dominik Moorhead. Not in picture)



U19s squad Josh Attwell, Lucas Hughes, Curtis Malik, Julian Standish, Tom Walsh, (Will Rowe and Charlie Farrant not in picture)