

LONDON'S HOPES TAKE A U-TURN

London County suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of County Durham in an instrumental game for those travelling up North, both Ladies teams played admirably with the Ladies B Team coming out on top in a dominant display.

Dee Belcher (18.11) was in fine form with a 3-1 win over Alison Wells (13.91) and Ged Carney (18.69) was superb beating Liz Tait (16.44) 3-1 hitting 2 x 180's along the way and earning the Lady of the Match award for London, Lisa Dunford (16.71) had a hard fought, close win over Karol Dagga (15.55), Tina Hamilton (17.05) returned to the fold with a 3-1 win over Michelle Downs (14.53) and Lynne Biondini (17.12) prepared for her 100th appearance in a London shirt with a tight, battling display, coming back from 0-2 down to earn a 3-2 win against Kirsty Hutchinson (15.75), in the final game, the opposite happened with Jane Johnson (12.54) going 2-0 up before finding herself a 2-3 loser to Kath Renwick (12.92) in a game with many missed doubles from both ladies, a superb 5-1 win from the Ladies B side.

It wasn't long before County Durham were level after 4 straight defeats, firstly Chris Copeland (21.39) lost 2-3 to David Brown (22.13) then Dave Goodwin (22.08) suffered a 1-3 loss to David Milburn (25.14), Paul Hackett (22.63) lost 0-3 to Steve Annan (25.05) and Tony Hamit (19.63) never got started in his 0-3 loss to David Gill (25.91), London's first win in the Mens B match came from Alan Hardy (24.72) winning 3-1 against Eddie Mordica (22.26), that would be Londons only win for a while a 5 defeats cam in quick succession for Stuart Pickles (24.62) who lost 3-1 to Durham Man of the Match David Crawley (26.10), Matt Winzar (20.77) making his debut lost 3-0 to James Forster (21.17), John Nelson (21.11) lost 3-1 to Graham Hutchinson (22.32) as did Rob Edwards (23.71) against Ian Adamson (25.42), Johnny Stefano (20.13) disappointed on his debut, losing 3-0 to Eric Sandwick (23.86), thankfully Jason Wiles (22.96) stooped the rot with a fine 3-1 win over Steve Hayers (21.81) and finally Lee Cocks (27.33) put in a Man of the Match performance for London with a 3-0 win over John Donnelly (22.44).

Ladies (B) 1-5....Men's (B) 9-3....OVERALL: County Durham 10-8 LONDON

London would need a fight back to be able to gain a victory over the strong Durham A sides and the Ladies started with a 3-1 defeat for Jackie Saunders (14.31) against Sharon Haywood (19.33), back to back 3-2 wins for Tammy MacKenzie (15.97) against Cheryl Wooff (13.94) and London Lady of the Match Clare Bywaters (18.56) against Bryanna Downs (16.29) was followed by 3 defeats for Kerry Simmons (16.06) who lost after missing doubles in the last leg 3-2 to Louise Simpson (15.80), Hayley Plume (20.76) lost her 100% record in a 3-1 loss to Durham Lady of the Match Margaret Stewart (21.01) and this was followed by a 3-0 loss for Sue Holt (17.65) against Jenny Summerson (20.31).

London were now 14-10 down and only a 9-3 win would see them get the much needed bonus points, Paul Wright (27.59) showed his class hitting 9 tons and 2 x 180 to get the Man of the Match award for London in a 3-2 win over Dave Gill (21.88), from this point London capitulated to 6 straight defeats, firstly Paul Killington (22.14) lost 3-0 to Robert Douthwaite (23.86) (more about Robert later), Graham Inniss (25.11) put up a fighting display in a 3-2 defeat to Paul Clark (25.04), Chris Stevens (22.07) lost 3-1 to Ian Adamson (24.38), Graham Rackstraw (20.92) lost 3-2 in a close game against Steve Knight (22.20), George Killington (28.48) belied his age in his first ever A team outing with a great display against Durhams in

form Kevin Naughton (30.09) but went down a 3-1 loser, Kevin gained the Man of the Match award for Durham and Jimmy Foster (21.21) lost 3-2 to George Davison (22.11), next up was a pretty tasteless incident when Lewis McGurn (24.24) beat Allan Bell (20.42) 3-0 for Londons second win of the day in the Mens A matches, after 4 or 5 throws each the score recorder for Durham had entered a score on darts for windows and the program crashed, Robert Douthwaite who had played earlier in the day and is also the Vice Chairman of County Durham came up to sort the problem out as he is the DFW expert, his rant and show of anger over something that could/should have taken minutes to solve descended into a delay of almost half an hour, swearing at anyone who offered help was out of order in my opinion, this resulted in the caller/mc from Durham walking out over his own Vice Chairmans display of anger, I can understand the frustration he may have felt but to dismiss anyones help delayed matters further than it should have, the problem was solved by me asking him if we could just take out the video link from their computer and put it in the London computer, job done in two minutes but his actions left a sour taste in the mouth and a strange atmosphere descended on the venue for the remainder of the games, I sincerely hope that County Durham bring this guy to book over his display because it could have been so much worse, I thank the other players and officials from Durham for apologising for him, but no apology was forthcoming from the man himself, I also thank the players and officials from London for not retaliating against his provocation, back to the darts and after Lewis' win came 4 straight defeats, firstly Richard Angelo (22.38) lost 3-2 to John Hardman (24.06), Steve McHale (23.77) lost 3-1 to Paul Dinning (26.39), Tom McGurn (22.63) making his A team debut lost 3-0 to Keith Gowland (29.47) and finally in a great game Richie Buckell (25.07) lost a close 3-2 against Phill Nixon (27.49) with Richie having darts to take the final leg.

Ladies (A) 4-2....Men's (A) 10-2....OVERALL: County Durham 27-12 LONDON

I am not going to beat about the bush here, this was the worse display from London that I have seen, the ladies from both the A and B sides can be proud of their results, even if one or two of their players under performed they still showed an amazing amount of team spirit winning 7 of the 12 games, as for the men winning only 5 out of 24 games, this is unacceptable, ok, some of those defeats are understandable with debuts and players stepping up to the A team for the first time but without naming names there were way too many from the London contingent who never stepped up to the mark, I will include myself in that statement although I enjoyed my first County experience I simply wasn't good enough on the day and aim to put that right in the next game, there are others who have more experience on the stage who quite simply didn't turn up, that is the unacceptable part of it because they all know what they are there for, to win dart matches and as harsh as this may sound, it just didn't look likely in most cases. Get your bloody heads on and take the bloody doubles out, there is no excuse from the experienced players.

Now for the very few positives, I've already mentioned the Ladies and they have a right to feel despondent after giving the men a platform to play from, from the men Alan Hardy has to be commended for his comfortable win, it actually put us back on the front foot and the rest of the team didn't take advantage of that, Jason Wiles was a welcome return because his enthusiasm is addictive for the whole team and Lee Cocks finally showed on the County stage what everyone has been seeing in Superleague all season, he has earned his call up to the A team the hard way, but he is there now and will do very well at the higher level. Paul Wright always leads by example and his win should have got the A men started but it didn't through no fault of his, George Killington was again magnificent despite his defeat, and there are many thing that can be learned by his game from many of those that lost, Lewis McGurn

pretty much had to play two separate games after the debacle of the Durham scoring fiasco and Richie Buckell fought all the way in his defeat to Nixy, Richie seems back to the sort of form we are used to seeing from him, and long may that continue.

Next up is Derbyshire at home and a big improvement will have to happen for London to get anything from this game, we have to rely on other results now to see promotion coming our way and the reality is that we will be playing in Division One again next season but this is no reason to rest on our laurels and think the season is over for us, with two games to go, there is much pride to play for after the display against Durham and we must always go out to win the match no matter the position we hold in the table.

Johnny Stefano