

County Team Report 2016-2017 Season

Unfortunately my last match in charge, the national semi-final against Suffolk, ended in defeat. Despite fielding our strongest team possible within the grading restriction we lost 9-7.

This season started optimistically when we fielded our strongest team in many years (Average 190) and beat Warwickshire 14½ - 1½ with no losses, the team featured Mark Hebden (always a welcome addition) and the return of Brandon Clarke, along with newcomers Louis Dong and Rafal Malczyk, this gave us 7 players graded over 190.

This was followed by a close win against Nottinghamshire 9-7, without such a stellar cast!

This is where our early season fortunes abandoned us and we suffered close defeats against Lincolnshire and Worcestershire, 9-7 and 8½ - 7½ respectively.

This meant we finished the midland stage in 3rd place and were awarded a national spot as Midlands 3, luckily only 8 eight teams entered the nationals so we avoided having to play a preliminary round, we were drawn against Cornwall in the quarter-final and apart from board 1 (Martin Burrows had to play Andrew Greet) we out graded a weak Cornwall side significantly and secured a comfortable 14½ - 1½ win. This obviously led to the semifinal defeat against Suffolk already mentioned above, and my final match as captain.

As usual I would like to thank everyone for their support this season, it was a pleasure to welcome Louis and Rafal into the team and also the return of Brandon, there were 5 players who played at least 5 of the 6 matches and remained unbeaten, 4 players managed all 6 matches, the standout performance being Shabir with 5.5/6 and a rating performance of 228,

2000-2017

Firstly I would like to thank everyone for the presentation made to me at the presentation night, It was totally unexpected and much appreciated, I myself had lost track of how long it had been plus I have had stints running the other county teams over the years so it was quite a shock to learn it was 17 years.

It has been a privilege and enjoyable to run the team over these years and whilst sometimes it was a struggle to get teams out there as always been a group of players who have stood in a short notice, to who I am most grateful, Jim Bingham, Mike Cowley, John Pattinson, Ben Pourmazafari, Glyn Ward to name a few.

Over these years the nucleus of the team has remained the same but there has always been a sprinkling of new players, university students from around the country and from around the world, we have had the pleasure of players from than 15 countries during my time as captain, we presently have Louis Dong from Vietnam but we have players from Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and we even had 2 Russians.

We only missed out on the national stages 3 times in these 17 years and won the Midlands title 3 times, 2006, 2009 and 2012, and had some epic matches against our East Midlands rivals and some unexpected results, I remember the match against Derby at Spondon in 2012, we needed to win to be champions, it was 7½ each and Andy Morley had a lost position against Derek Jarvis, so everyone else went to pub to drown our sorrows, leaving me to watch Andy conduct his usual time scramble,

nobody believed us when we got to the pub and announced Andy had won and therefore we were Midlands champs!!

My biggest regret was that we never became national champions, we managed a few semi-finals, 1 famous match against Essex (2012) Mark won on top board and everyone else started to take draws, 14 of them which meant even if Brandon lost on board 2 we would win on board count, he won and we went to the national finals.

The final was against Hertfordshire who we had lost to in 2 previous seasons, 2010, by $8\frac{1}{2} - 7\frac{1}{2}$, 2011, by 8-8 lost on board count, it once again went to the wire and we lost, again on board count.

As I have said it has been a pleasure running the team, made easier over the years thanks to emails and the internet. My biggest enjoyment has been getting everyone together for these matches, beers and curries afterwards and as I said the team has stayed pretty much the same throughout this time. We have lost great characters like Otto Hardy and Alan Edwards, welcomed back players such as Shabir, who in his last match before university was graded 143!! We have stalwarts like John Robinson who announced this season he had secured his 100th win for the county and 1 player in particular I would like to thank, having only missed about 3 matches in this time and always turns up early to help set up, Ray Burgess, a great servant to Leicestershire chess- thank you.

On to the new season and John Denton has volunteered to take over the captaincy, I wish him the best of luck and hope you will all continue to give him the great support you have given me over years and if he is really desperate for players you may even see me playing!!

Graham Booley