

COUNTY VETERANS 2023/24

1st WEEKEND – ASHFORD TTC 2ND/ 3RD DECEMBER 2023

Leicestershire faced a tough assignment for the first weekend of matches, having to play the top 3 counties from last season.

Matters weren't helped with Dave Gannon and Matt Hobday reporting niggling injuries just days before the weekend. As a precaution, Andy LeButt was added to the travelling squad, joining Chris Rogers and Karen Smith.

The first match v **Yorkshire** resulted in an **8-2 loss**, with only Chris registering success, winning both his singles. Congratulations to Matt Hobday on his debut, but it was a hard opener for him.

Andy replaced Matt for the second match against **Hertfordshire** and Leicestershire fell 2-0 behind before close 5th game wins for Chris and Karen (against England No 1 Veteran Sara Williams) brought it back to 2-2. A very strong Herts side then won the next 6 sets and another **8-2 loss** was inflicted.

The final match was against champions **Nottinghamshire** and a 3rd straight loss ensued. Although the final score was **6-4**, Leicestershire benefitted from 2 concessions due to an injury sustained during the match to Nottingham's Mark Short. Chris recovered from 2-0 down to beat England No 3 Veteran Jason Ramage, and Karen won her singles v Sarah Short to get the 2 sets won on the table.

2nd WEEKEND – DRAYCOTT TTC 27TH / 28TH JANUARY 2024

With Dave Gannon unavailable for the weekend, Leicestershire played all 4 matches with the team of Chris Rogers, Matt Hobday, Abraham Conteh and Karen Smith.

Although bottom of the table, Leicestershire knew they could move up the standings with some positive results against the other teams in the bottom half.

Leicestershire's hopes were enhanced in the first match v **Cheshire** as England No 2 Veteran Kevin Dolder was unavailable, and they took full advantage with a convincing **7-3 victory**.

Abraham excelled with 2 singles wins, matched by Chris, and the 2 combined for a win in the Mens Doubles. Karen won her singles 11-7 in the 5th after a good battle with Gemma Grant and Chris & Karen won their mixed to complete the scoring.

Next up were **Essex**, also pointless after the first weekend and another victory would edge Leicestershire away from the relegation places.

Leicestershire raced into a 4-0 lead with '3 straight' victories for Chris, Abraham (v Clive Carthy), Matt (v ex Leicester League player, Duncan Taylor) and Chris & Karen in the Mixed Doubles.

It looked like it would be 5-0 as Abraham battled back from 2-0 down to get to match points up in the 5th, but just let it slip at the end going down 12-10.

He soon shrugged off the disappointment winning the Mens Doubles with Chris, and Matt then sealed the match victory with another good win over Carthy.

A further win for Chris left the final score **7-3 to Leicestershire**.

Sunday morning saw **Sussex** as the opponents. At the halfway stage Sussex had a narrow 3-2 advantage – Chris with a singles and Chris & Karen with their mixed doubles keeping Leicestershire in touch. After that it was all Leicestershire. Karen had a comfortable victory over Rose Rainton and Chris and Abraham picked up another Mens Doubles. Matt had a nailbiter against Lewis Mayhew, losing a 2-0 lead but kept his cool to win 11-9 in the 5th, Chris won in 4 against Ritchie Venner and Matt and Karen won the final mixed doubles as Leicestershire recorded a 3rd successive **7-3 win**.

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With a minimum 5th place finish assured, Leicestershire took on **Kent** in their final match. Matt started off with a stunning 3-0 win over Kent No 1 Chris Bartram, and Leicestershire extended the lead to 3-1 with wins for Chris and Chris & Karen in the mixed. Kent though took the next 4 sets although both Matt (in 5 games) and Abraham (in 4 close games) made them fight all the way. Chris beat Bartram in 5 to keep the match alive, but the final mixed doubles went to Kent and the weekend closed with a **6-4 loss**.

Overall, a highly successful weekend with some excellent wins for everyone and a 5th place finish securing Premier Division status for next season.

	Team	P	W	D	L	SF	SA	Pts
1	Nottinghamshire 1	7	7	0	0	52	18	14
2	Kent 1	7	5	1	1	41	29	11
3	Hertfordshire 1	7	5	0	2	46	24	10
4	Yorkshire 1	7	4	0	3	34	36	8
5	Leicestershire 1	7	3	0	4	33	37	6
6	Sussex 1	7	1	2	4	30	40	4
7	Cheshire 1	7	1	0	6	24	46	2
8	Essex 1	7	0	1	6	20	50	1