

## **18U BOYS COUNTY CUP REPORT by Rich Irwin**

**Captain** : Rich Irwin

**The Team** : Louis Allen, Ben Battey, Sam Bossem, Finley Bygrave, Millen Hurrion, Ben Patten, Freddie Powell, Toby Samuel

**Venue** : Gosling Tennis Centre, Welwyn Garden City

### **Day 1 v Suffolk - Lost 6-3**

The first day of the event saw an excited Dorset team come head to head with overall the strongest team of the weekend. It looked like a close match up after the first round of matches with Ben Battey putting Dorset in front, while unfortunately Freddie Powell was overcome by the Suffolk number 4. At number 5 Finley Bygrave held the advantage in the balance as he fought back to take his match to a 3rd set but unfortunately, came unstuck to give Suffolk a 2-1 lead. In the second round of matches, Suffolk proved dominant with the Dorset trio of Toby Samuel, Louis Allen and Millen Hurrion unable to keep Dorset in the tie. However, with all still to play for on the first day and rubbers always coming back to haunt teams on Sunday, Dorset put up a great fight winning 2 of the 3 doubles and missing out on all of them by the smallest of margins in a championship tie break. A 6-3 defeat but a character defining performance from the boys ahead of Lincolnshire on Saturday.

### **Day 2 v Lincolnshire - Won 6-3**

Lincolnshire came in to the match following a 5-4 win v Yorkshire and full of confidence however it was Dorset's strong lower order that set the tone for the day. Brought in for his U18 debut, Sam Bossem got his first win on the board with a strong singles win which was matched by Ben Battey and Freddie Powell to put Dorset in the driving seat at 3-0. Lincolnshire had a strong higher order which proved too tough for Hurrion and Allen, but Toby Samuel stepped up and turned around his performance from Day 1 to keep Dorset ahead at 4-2 going in to the doubles. The doubles pairings were tweaked from the previous day to try and avoid the strong higher order of Lincolnshire's team and it worked as again, Dorset took 2 out of 3 doubles to seal a strong win and set up an exciting last day with both promotion and relegation still possible.

### **Day 3 v Yorkshire - Lost 6-3**

Following 2 close defeats, Yorkshire knew anything but a win would mean relegation and they came out fighting to make sure that didn't happen. Dorset knew if they won there could be a slim chance of promotion but this would mean Lincs beating Suffolk who were looking a level above the other teams. Again, the first 3 singles matches were hard fought and with Dorset needing to make use of their stronger lower order, Bossem and Battey again showed their class putting Dorset 2-0 up, but although a valiant effort, Bygrave couldn't get the win to gain a clean sweep. Dorset 2-1 up after the first round. 3 tough but winnable matches ahead although it was Yorkshire who came out on top 2-1 with Hurrion picking up a big win at number 1 to tie the match at 3-3 and send it all down to the doubles. Keeping the same pairs in doubles, the job was to try and again take advantage of our strong lower order and although the number 1 pair of Yorkshire were looking too strong for the Allen/Bossem partnership, Dorset were 5-2 up in one match and a set up in the other. However, a match is never over until it's over and Yorkshire fought for their lives and turned both matches around putting them both in to championship tie breaks knowing just one of them would help them survive. A brave effort from the pairs of Hurrion/Battey and Samuel/Bygrave but both Dorset pairs fell short meaning Yorkshire clinched an almost unfair 6-3 scoreline on reflection. Suddenly it was Dorset's turn to worry about relegation with all Dorset, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire on 1 win, however, Dorset have Suffolk to thank for putting in a dominant display which eventually sent Lincolnshire down.

A tough weekend for the Dorset team but as always a great weekend and full of hard battles.