

County Open Team Report

In the local EACU stage, Suffolk were able to field a team this year which meant we were back to six matches across three Sundays to determine which of the four counties (Beds, Cambs, Norfolk and Suffolk) would win the EACU county title. We had a good start to the season, winning both of our matches convincingly. We led the table ahead of Norfolk, who had also won both of their matches. For round 3 & 4, we lost a close match against Norfolk 7-9 but had a convincing victory against Suffolk leaving us only one match point behind the leaders, Norfolk.

For the final pair of matches, many regular players were unavailable and we struggled. We needed to win both matches to claim the EACU title. We beat Suffolk but were convincingly beaten by a strong Norfolk team where we were outrated by 25 points per board. And so we finished 2nd in the table which meant we had qualified for the National stages, once again.

All of the Cambridgeshire results from the local matches can be viewed here:

<https://lms.englishchess.org.uk/lms/team/24752/fixtures>

For the National stages, our first match was a quarter final against 2024 winners, Sussex. We prevailed 9.5-6.5, although the match was in the balance right until the end. We were rewarded with a fixture against Devon, which meant a long drive to a neutral venue near Winchester. Again a close match was tied at 5-5 before a quick succession of wins led to a 10-6 victory and a place in the final. Meanwhile local rivals Norfolk had also qualified after beating Lincolnshire 8.5-7.5. So, in a repeat of last year's final, we played Norfolk in Garbaldisham, near Diss on Saturday 4th July. Again the match was tied at 8-8 after more than five hours of play, but the Norfolk captain had realised the match was ours, once again on board count.

So we won the Minor Counties championship for the third time in four years, always against Norfolk and always on board count! Altogether, 31 different players, including 5 juniors, played in the county open team this season with several new players who have not played for the county open team before.

The knockout stages and individual results can be viewed here:

<https://lms.englishchess.org.uk/lms/event/9796/ktable>

Paul McMahon

County Open team captain

N.B. The venue costs for the final are paid for directly by the ECF so the county have nothing to pay. I think the trophy engraving may also be covered by the ECF although it is the county's responsibility to get it engraved and, if appropriate, claim the money back.