



4NCL Weekend 1, 19th-20th November, Press Report by Rhys Cumming

Division 1 Pool A

Last years' runners-up Cheddleton, fresh from competing in the European Club Cup in Serbia, kicked off their challenge to Guildford's four year hold over the 4NCL title with two comprehensive victories. On the Saturday they beat the newly promoted Celtic Tigers and on Sunday had a very impressive 7-1 victory over Blackthorne Russia. The only other side with two victories to their name were 3Cs, who last year were just pipped to a place in the Championship Pool by Guildford 2. It's fair to presume then, that their victory over Guildford 2 in round 1 may prove crucial in determining who makes it into the Championship Pool this time around. Anyone following Guildford 1's matches over the past few seasons will be aware that 8-0 score-lines are not uncommon in this division, however 3Cs' Sunday match set a new record as far as I'm aware, as they beat King's Head by a score of 8 to -1. This came as King's Head could only field 7 players and were forced to default on bottom board. Like most sides promoted from Division 2, King's Head look like they will find Division 1 tough going, however the other promoted side in the pool, Celtic Tigers, managed to notch up an important win over South Wales Dragons. South Wales Dragons seem to narrowly escape going down every year, but with an early loss to fellow relegation rivals, it won't be easy to repeat this feat. The other notable result saw last year's 3rd place finishers Barbican, albeit missing several first team regulars, losing in the first round to Guildford 2, both of whom now sit on 2 points with one win and one loss.

Division 1A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1 Cheddleton 1					7-1	7½-½			14½	4
2 3Cs 1				5½-2½				8--1	13½	4
3 Barbican 4NCL 1				3½-4½				5½-2½	9	2
4 Guildford 2		2½-5½	4½-3½						7	2
5 Blackthorne Russia	1-7						4½-3½		5½	2
6 Celtic Tigers	½-7½						4½-3½		5	2
7 South Wales Dragons					3½-4½	3½-4½			7	0
8 Kings Head		-1-8	2½-5½						1½	0

Division 1 Pool B

Unsurprisingly after one weekend it is Guildford who lead pool B after two victories, including two Gawain Jones king hunts (the first of which is featured at the bottom of this report). On the Saturday they comprehensively beat Barbican 2 7.5-0.5 before beating newly promoted Anglian Avengers 6-2 on Sunday. For Anglian, a side whose target will presumably be staying in the division, getting 4 draws all of which came against GMs is no mean feat. Two other teams also won both matches. White Rose, who are typically in a battle for 3rd place, had two very important victories. They beat Wood Green 5-3 despite being narrowly out-rated and then proceeded to demolish Oxford 7-1 despite the match-up looking very close on paper. The final team on full points so far are Grantham Sharks, who going into the final weekend last year looked like they might be playing in Division 2 this season. They made a repeat of relegation troubles look unlikely after just one weekend with 5-3 wins over each of Barbican 2 and Anglian Avengers. Meanwhile three teams remain scoreless: Barbican 2, and the two newly promoted sides Anglian Avengers and North East England.



Division 1B	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1 Guildford 1						6-2		7½-½	13½	4
2 White Rose 1				5-3	7-1				12	4
3 Grantham Sharks 1						5-3		5-3	10	4
4 Wood Green HK		3-5					6-2		9	2
5 Oxford 1		1-7					5½-2½		6½	2
6 Anglian Avengers 1	2-6		3-5						5	0
7 North East England				2-6	2½-5½				4½	0
8 Barbican 4NCL 2	½-7½		3-5						3½	0

Division 2A

If one were to judge purely based on ratings, Pool A looks to be significantly weaker than Pool B. While this may turn out to be true, Division 2 has never been one for ratings favourites. Many a relegated Division 1 team has found themselves dropping through the division, and last year the average ratings in the demotion pool were higher than in the promotion pool. Part of the reasoning for the rating disparity between the pools may be seen in a couple of the younger, more underrated teams. For example, Barbican Youth would have been promoted last year were it not for having two teams already in Division 1 despite being one of the lowest rated teams in the division. They turned the rating tables once more in round 2, with a clean sweep over the top 4 boards giving them a victory over Downend & Fishponds. Barbican were beaten 4.5-3.5 in round 1 however, by a new force in Division 2, West is Best, who also won their Sunday match against CSC Dragons. They are joined on full points by Sussex Martlets who were returning to the division after surprisingly being promoted 2 seasons ago. They were unbeaten over the two first rounds with comprehensive victories over Warwickshire Select 2 and Grantham Sharks 2, although the 5.5-2.5 scoreline over Grantham was perhaps helped by Rasa Norinkeviciute on board 6 being gifted a mate in 1 in a completely lost position. The AD's are the highest rated side in the pool, while Warwickshire Select 2 are one of the lowest, so in true Division 2 style, Warwickshire turned the tables in part thanks to impressive victories for Henrik Stepanyan on board 1 and David Phillips on board 8.

Division 2A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1 Sussex Martlets 1						6½-1½	5½-2½		12	4
2 West is Best 1				4½-3½				5½-2½	10	4
3 Barbican 4NCL Youth		3½-4½			5½-2½				9	2
4 Downend & Fishponds				2½-5½				5½-2½	8	2
5 Warwickshire Select 2	1½-6½						5-3		6½	2
6 The ADs						3-5	4-4		7	1
7 Grantham Sharks 2	2½-5½						4-4		6½	1
8 CSC Dragons		2½-5½		2½-5½					5	0



Division 2 Pool B

When Alba entered the league in Division 3N last year, there was clearly an expectation throughout the league that they wouldn't be there for long. They also likely won't be in Division 2 for long and they started with two wins, albeit narrow ones, over the strong sides of Warwickshire Select 1 and Spirit of Atticus. They didn't have things all their own way with John Pitcher beating Andrew Greet on Saturday and Martin Mitchell beating John Shaw on the Sunday. Nevertheless Division 2 will probably be a battle for second place behind Alba. Cambridge University 1 had been in Division 1 for many years until they were relegated last year, but they did not look like they wanted to be in the second flight for long with comprehensive victories over White Rose 2 and Bradford DCA Knights A. Guildford 3 beat those same two teams to join Alba and Cambridge at the top of the table. KJCA Kings have a very young team of promising juniors and can count themselves very unlucky to be pointless having lost 4.5-3.5 to two very good teams in Spirit of Atticus and Warwickshire Select 1.

Division 2B	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1 Cambridge University 1							5½-2½	6½-1	12	4
2 Guildford 3							4½-3½	6-1½	10½	4
3 Alba				5-3	5-3				10	4
4 Warwickshire Select 1				3-5		4½-3½			7½	2
5 Spirit of Atticus A				3-5		4½-3½			7½	2
6 KJCA Kings				3½-4½	3½-4½				7	0
7 White Rose 2	2½-5½	3½-4½							6	0
8 Bradford DCA Knights A	1-6½	1½-6							2½	0

Round 1: Barbican 2 vs Guildford 1

White: James Jackson (2290) Black: Gawain Jones (2663)

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O b5 6. Bb3 Bc5 7. c3 d6 8. Re1 Bb6 9. a4 Bb7 10. d4 h6 11. Qd3 O-O 12. d5 Na5 13. Ba2 c6 14. Nbd2 cxd5 15. exd5 Ng4 16. Rf1 f5 17. Qe2 bxa4 18. h3 Nf6 19. c4 Nh5 20. Qd1 Ng3 21. Re1 [Diagram]



The position before black's 21st move:

21... e4 22. Nh2 Bxf2! 23. Kxf2 Qb6 24. Kxg3 f4 25. Kh4 Qd8 26. Kg4 Qg5#

The rest of the games can be found in pgn form here:

www.4ncl.co.uk/downloads.htm