

Leinster Senior Team Trip Report January 2023



The Leinster Senior Team travelled to Luton for the second weekend fixture of the 2022-23 Senior County Championships. The team knew that it had its' work cut out as in addition to playing Derbyshire and Essex, the team would meet Warwickshire who were top of the table coming into the second weekend. With players of the calibre of Sam Parsons & Brandon Yap on opposing teams, just to name two, the team knew it would need to come out with all cylinders firing.

The weekend kicked off versus Derbyshire. And this Leinster team made a very clear statement of intent to all present. David, Adam, and Vincent won the three men's singles. Michelle and Siofra followed and won their women's singles. Their opponents were left shell-shocked as both were beaten to single digits in both sets. Mens doubles followed and Derbyshire worked hard to recover from the relentless onslaught. David & Adam won 22-20 in the third in a phenomenal game of doubles. Scott and Vincent won the first set 22-20, lost the second to 11 but worked through the

gears and won the third to 13. Sara and Michelle looked extremely comfortable in their doubles win and this could be a partnership to watch in the future. Jennie and Siofra worked hard, but were unable to get over the line despite their best efforts. Leinster and Derbyshire shared the spoils in the mixed with Sara and David bringing all their experience to get the win in two. Scott and Jennie narrowly lost in two, leaving Leinster with a 9-2 win.

The team just had time to move courts before the fixture versus Essex began. David lost a very tight three-setter to Brandon Yap with Adam and Vincent both winning their singles. Sara played singles in this fixture and took the win against the experienced Caroline Westley. Michelle once again showed why she is one of the top U17 European singles players with another straight-set win. Leinster were leading 4-1 heading into the doubles and shared the spoils equally across the rest of the matches. Having given it their all, David and Adam lost out in another stunning game of doubles. Scott and Vincent won their doubles 22-22 23-25 22-20, and left the rest of the team not feeling the better for it!! Sara and Jennie were able to use their experience to win their game in two. Despite playing one of their best doubles matches to date, Siofra and Michelle just fell short of the win. David and Siofra were up against a really strong English mixed pairing and unfortunately, were unable to get across the line. Scott and Jennie looked far more comfortable in their second mixed outing and as their confidence grew, they won in two. The quality of the English doubles and mixed players was highly evident in this match; however, Leinster came away with a 7-4 win.

The team was up nice and early on Sunday to face Warwickshire, the table leaders coming into the weekend. After a brisk walk to the hall on a frosty, sunny morning the players were quietly focused on the games ahead. Being the first team to arrive, the players began their warm-ups and prepared to go out and fight for every point. The three men's singles kicked off at 10am. The hall was privileged to witness a wonderful display of talent and spirit across all three courts. David took the first Leinster win, beating Sam Parsons in a three-setter that had it all – attack, defence, patience, shots of a quality that you would not normally see. Adam was unbeaten in his singles until now and fought a tightly contested 3-setter but just fell short of the win. Vincent treated all present to a 75 minute three-setter. Having gone down 9-14 in the third, he was as cool as ice to work through some extraordinary rallies to win the third 23-21 (blood pressure tablets required by all!) The largest challenge was trying to watch all three matches concurrently.

Sara knew that she was facing a challenge in her singles match, however, she brought out the talent and work-rate of a former National Champion and stormed through her opponent in straight sets. We are almost guilty at this point of taking Michelle for granted. She once again quietly went out with a steely determination to make short work of her opponent, and she didn't disappoint. You know you have a special player when the rest of the hall are asking questions and taking a massive interest in that player. Once again, the spoils of the mens and womens doubles were shared equally. David and Adam played against an incredibly talented doubles pairing, worked extremely well and just fell short of the win. Scott and Vincent played a great game of doubles, winning in three. Sara and Jennie again gave a solid performance to win in straight sets. Michelle and Siofra gained valuable experience despite losing their doubles. It was possibly a combination of fatigue, and the pure quality of the opposition, however, the team was unable to win either of the mixed. Still, Leinster took the win 6-5.

This team showed tremendous heart over the course of the weekend. Every player brought their all to each match and fought for every point. For instance, Leinster won 8 of the 10 three-set matches they played. Additionally, the support, coaching and encouragement given by each other, to each other, most certainly helped players get the wins in some of the tighter matches. The team consisted

of a well-balanced combination of youth and experience and congratulations must be given to Scott and Vincent on making their Leinster Senior debuts. We look forward to seeing this pair represent Leinster for many years to come. Siofra and Michelle are now looking like seasoned veterans following their second senior fixture. Both athletes continue to develop, and each have a very exciting future ahead. It was great to have Adam and Sara back representing Leinster, and long may this continue. Their talent, experience and team-work is invaluable to the group. As at the previous weekend, both Jennie and David led from the front. It is very clear to see why David earned his award of BI National Coach of the Year as he helped players get across the line whenever he wasn't on court himself. Jennie is also a veteran of the Leinster Senior team, and her experience on and off the court could not be bought.

At this point of proceedings, Leinster have five wins from five. The final fixtures will be played on the 25-26th March. Leinster are currently 4th on the table, however, have a game in hand. It will be all to play for when they face Kent, Sussex, Northumberland and Nottinghamshire.

The Senior Team would like to extend its thanks to the Leinster Executive Committee for their ongoing support and investment. Thanks goes to Betty in the office for organising the logistics for the trip. The Senior Team is interested in partnering with a sponsor for additional support for travel and training purposes and would be happy to engage in any discussions. Please contact Leinster Badminton privately if interested.

Many thanks goes to Yonex, the official equipment supplier to Leinster Badminton.

Team: Sara Boyle, Siofra Flynn, Scott Guildea, Jennie King, Adam McAllister, Vincent Pontanosa, Michelle Shochan, David Walsh.

Manager: Liza O'Rourke