

Leinster Senior Team Trip Report

November 2023

Having gained promotion to the Senior County Premiership for the 2023-24 season, the senior team travelled to Milton Keynes for the first weekend fixture to play Buckinghamshire, Yorkshire and Avon. The team was fully aware that everyone would have to be playing at their best to be able to compete with these teams and the week running up to the weekend away was challenging. One player had to withdraw due to an ongoing niggle. A second player was only returning to training the week of the competition due to an injury and a third player was also carrying a niggle into the weekend.

The first match on Saturday morning was against Bucks who came second in the league last season. The players put in some excellent performances; however, Leinster was only able to put 3 points on the table with wins from Jonathan Dolan in first men's singles, Scott Guildea and Vincent Pontanosa in second mens doubles and Chloe McGrane and David Walsh in third mixed doubles. Jonathan and David lost first men's doubles 21-5 19-21 24-26 and unfortunately, this tight loss was a portent of events to come. Disaster struck when Vincent was injured at 17-16 in the first set of the second mixed doubles and the decision was made to retire.

The team was immediately on again versus Yorkshire and fast decisions were being made how to put out the team to maximise our winning potential, knowing that we had to give two walkovers before a shuttle was hit. Last season, Yorkshire came fifth in the league. The team was not found to be wanting and every single player stepped up to the challenge before them. In quick succession, Leinster had 5 wins on the table from Jonathan Dolan, David Walsh, Sara Boyle, Siofra Flynn and Jonathan & David in the doubles. The next 4 matches went to Yorkshire, all of which were extremely tight, but Leinster was unable to get across the line in any of them. With the inclusion of the two walkovers, Yorkshire won the tie 6-5.

On Sunday morning, the team played against Avon who came sixth in the previous season. Once again, the team was facing an uphill challenge going into the fixture with two walkovers given. With wins from Jonathan Dolan, Siofra Flynn and David Walsh & Scott Guildea, it was all to play for in the remaining matches. It is difficult to describe what unfolded over the course of the coming couple of hours. In summary, Avon took the win 8-3, including the two walkovers. However, once again, Leinster lost every tight match and, on another day, the score could easily have been reversed. Quite incredibly, despite taking 8 matches, Avon scored 436 points versus the 430 points that Leinster scored, with only 3 wins!

It was a challenging weekend for Leinster in several different ways. 30 sets were lost on a margin of 2 points, with only a single tight match being won across the three fixtures of the weekend. Players put in incredible performances but were simply missing a rub of the green and on another day the results would have gone in our favour. Vincent Pontanosa's withdrawal due to injury was hugely significant as he was playing the best badminton he has ever played and would certainly have won more points for Leinster over the course of the weekend. If a person tended towards superstition, they would be left wondering if Murphy's Law was in force across the entire weekend.

The team will regroup ahead of the next fixture in January and will compete against Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Leicestershire. Many thanks go to all of the players – Sara Boyle, Siofra Flynn, Jennie



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Magee, Chloe McGrane, Jonathan Dolan, Scott Guildea, Vincent Pontanosa and David Walsh. The team would like to express its appreciation for the ongoing support from Leinster Badminton and also the team sponsor, Yonex.

Liza O'Rourke – Leinster Senior Team Manager

