

Leeds Carnegie 1 Vs London Polonia

After the disappointment of narrowly missing out on the women's championship, coach Simon Loftus was keen to make sure lightning didn't strike twice. His Leeds Carnegie men's team were facing the conquerors of Team Northumbria from the previous day, London Polonia.

At 6-6 in the first set, you could already tell this was likely to be an extremely close game. The points went back and forth, each team showing relentless pressure at the net and refusing to give any cheap points away. A Polonia serve into the net produced the first unforced error, which gave Leeds a 2-point advantage at 10-8, however some fantastic blocking tied the score at 12-12. It was neck and neck until some superb defence from Leeds opened up a 15-12 lead, however in keeping with the theme of the set, Polonia pegged them back once again to make it 15 all! Leeds suddenly started to find their rhythm and took the lead at 21-18. As pressure mounted a serve into the net gave the initiative back to Polonia, however Leeds resisted their advances and earned 3 set points. Polonia dug deep and remarkably managed to pull the score back to 24-24 to stay in the set. Both teams traded point for point until Polonia got their first set point at 27-26, but a huge block from Leeds saw the ball drop on the line to save a crucial point. It was once again Leeds' turn to serve for the set. A nervy rally eventually saw the ball bounce off a Polonia head and out of reach of any team-mates, handing the first set to Leeds 29-27.

Set 2 promised much of the same, as both teams quickly got back into their rhythm. Some well constructed points from Leeds, with hits coming from varying angles, helped them to a 6-4 lead. Polonia levelled at 7-7, but a long serve undid their hard work, allowing Leeds to capitalize and re-open the lead at 12-9. An unfortunate block, which sailed over the back line, followed by a spike that landed just wide forced Polonia into a timeout at 15-10 down. The gap was cut by one point at the restart, however they still had a lot to do at the 2nd technical time out as they found themselves 4 points behind. Two successive points followed by two superb blocks from the Polonia defence levelled the score at 16-16 and they continued the run of points to take the lead 19-17. Carnegie called for a time out once Polonia extended their lead to 20-17. At 22-20 up, Polonia sent their captain Michas Saller back on to try and seal the second set. A double touch from Polonia gave Leeds the break they needed as a time out was called at 23-22 to Polonia. It was Leeds who nicked the first point at the restart, levelling the scores at 23-23. An ace off a net cord at 24-23 up gave Leeds the second set, however all the players knew from the previous final that even at 2 sets up, the game was not over!

For the third time in the match, Polonia took the opening point of the set, but struggled to string a run of points together. For the first time in the match, the Leeds team looked to be getting the better of their opponents. For every point Polonia won, Leeds managed to get two. The first technical time out came as Leeds found themselves 8-5 to the good. Leeds pulled away to 10-6, as Polonia's efforts to gain victory against Northumbria started to show. A double substitution caused more confusion than success, as several Polonia players watched the ball drop to the floor between them, each waiting for the other to commit to the shot. The freshness of the Leeds players was starting to shine through as their tempo never faltered, pushing on to lead 16-10 at the second technical time out. Two wasted serves from Polonia at 13-17 and 14-19 showed that they were there for the taking. Yet another service error at 16-20 looked to be the final blow. As Leeds rallied to try and end the game quickly, Polonia found some strength and to save 3 match points. However, Leeds got the crucial point they were looking for at the 4th time of asking, taking the set 25-22, and with it, the 2012 Men's Super 8s Championship.