



MATCH REPORTS

DIVISION ONE MEN

Saturday 10th March 2012

Venue: Bacon's College, Rotherhithe

London Dockland's Vs London Knights

Result: London Knights won 3:2 (25-23, 23-25, 17-25, 25-20, 11-15)

London Docklands fell to their fourth five-set defeat of the season following an inconsistent performance against London Knights. That was Knights' third victory over Docklands this season and is a severe blow to Docklands' promotion hopes. However, a shock Solent loss means it's still mathematically possible for Docklands to finish in second place and clinch a play-off against old rivals Sheffield.

Set one was a close affair with neither side able to open up any sort of lead. Docklands coach Danny Primus introduced himself at 18-18 to serve. Three serves later he'd scored an ace and served long but his team had edged ahead 20-19. The two sides traded points with Docklands' Sylvain Renouard and Knights' Ginjiro Katsura determined to leave their mark on the opposition. Docklands held onto their slender advantage to gain two set points at 24-22. They took the set at the second attempt when a Knights' hitting error gave Docklands the set 25-23.

When an ace by Marc Schaeperstoens levelled the second set at 20-20, the home supporters must have been expecting Docklands to close out the set as they had done in the first. But Knights had other ideas and service pressure by Henry Mulhall helped take them to the brink at 24-22. This time it was a Docklands' hitting error that gave the set to Knights, 25-23.

Docklands just didn't get going in set three. They trailed by four points at both technical time-outs. Knights were playing well and Docklands were struggling to stop Mulhall and Katura whilst setter Taku Yamamoto was running his offence to great affect. In the end Knights coasted into a 2-1 lead with a 25-17 third set win.

Primus re-jigged his line-up slightly and precision serving by Matthias Gilch helped Docklands take an 8-2 lead at the start of the fourth set. Knights made a mini-recovery but only ever got to within four points and a kill by Tom Wenzel closed out the set 25-20. So for the fourth match in a row, Docklands faced a fifth set shoot out to 15.

Knights quickly got the upper hand and were 8-5 up at the change of ends. Despite a valiant effort from the home side they could not make up the deficit and Knights ran out worthy winners 15-11. Primus commented afterwards, "The match was a microcosm of our season with some very good play alongside some periods of poor play. However, we've come a long way with a new team and we're still in with a chance and you can bet we'll keep on fighting till the end".

Docklands' next match is their biggest of the season so far when they travel to Southampton to take on Solent. Docklands won the home tie 3-0 in their best performance of the season. They will need to at least repeat that performance to be victorious in a must win game for both sides.

Docklands MVP: Platon Vogiatzoglou

Knights MVP: Taku Yamamoto

www.londondocklandsvc.com

Saturday 18th February 2012

Venue: Bacon's College, Rotherhithe

London Dockland's Vs London Lynx 2

Result: London Lynx 2 won 3:2 (25-19, 25-19, 20-25, 25-27, 9-15)

London Docklands let slip a two nil lead against London Lynx 2, dealing a devastating blow to their chances of gaining a quick return to the Super8s. Docklands needed to keep on churning out the 3-0 victories to maintain the pressure on second placed SGTV Solent but a poor day at the office may have cost them dearly. By contrast, Lynx are battling to avoid relegation but after a poor start to the season Lynx have put together an impressive string of victories that have boosted their chances of survival. The match also saw Docklands' Marc Schaeperstoens and Platon Vogiatzoglou face their old club so there was more riding on it than just three points.

The first two sets gave no indication of the horrors that would greet Docklands later in the match. Docklands started each set confidently and immediately put pressure on Lynx's passing unit. Docklands outaced Lynx seven to nil in the first two sets and were rarely threatened by a lacklustre Lynx display. Vogiatzoglou was continuing his good form and Alex Gaitan was proving to be a handful at the net. Both sets one and two were secured by Docklands 25-19 at a canter.

Then the wheels came off the Docklands' bus whilst Lynx upped their game and went in for the kill. Docklands were struggling to stop Leon Chambers and the experience of Brazilian pair Henrique Araujo and Juliano Jesus was beginning to tell. In the end a kill by Chambers sealed the set 25-20 and Docklands knew they had a fight on their hands.

Lynx maintained their momentum into set four and Docklands' coach Danny Primus was forced to make changes to try and resurrect his side's fortunes. Gaitan took over the setting duties for the first time in his second spell with Docklands whilst debutant Márcio Silveira came into the opposite slot. Docklands slowly recovered from being 16-11 down at the second technical time-out, helped by a run of clinical serves by Mark Baechli. Docklands were back on level terms by 19-19 but two quick Lynx points swung it back the visitor's way. Lynx held on to gain two set points at 24-22. However, Docklands finally showed some spirit and fought their way back on level terms. Then suddenly a block by Alessandro Galli set-up a Docklands' match point. However, Lynx held their nerve as a kill by Donnique Mabena tied the set at 25-25. In a nervy end to the set it was Chambers again who inflicted the killer blow to take the match into the deciding fifth set.

Docklands made the better start in the final set, taking a 6-2 lead. But Lynx were not giving up and were one-point ahead at the change of ends. The momentum was all with Lynx and Docklands had no answer. In the end the visitors ran out 15-9 winners to give them a valuable win at the bottom of the table.

The result means that Docklands are now reliant on other results going their way and still need a convincing win when they travel to Solent next month. Docklands now move their focus to the Shield semi final against Tendring next week. The winner will be rewarded with a final appearance at the Cup final weekend in Kettering in April.

Docklands MVP: Platon Vogiatzoglou

Staffs MVP: Henrique Araujo

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Saturday 18th February 2012

Venue: Keele University

Newcastle (Staffs) Vs Brentwood Estonians

Result: Newcastle (Staffs) won 3:0 (28-26, 25-16, 25-18)

When these two side met earlier in the season in Essex the young 'Castle players were given a very hostile

reception by the host team and its supporters, riding out that storm for a very satisfying 3-0 win. With this background 'Castle knew to expect a tough match but the first set was a real shock to the system for the team as they put in a shocking display for the first part of the set.

After McKellar had absolutely buried the ball through the middle at the very start of the set 'Castle played a game of uncharacteristic hitting errors. They went from 8-4 down at the first technical time-out to 16-6 at the second. Bradbury, Allen, Shenton, Roberts, McKellar and Jenkins were all responsible for the dire display and when Brentwood took the first point after the technical it was 17-6 to the visitors, surely an unassailable lead. Coach Lovell made no changes to his line-up, and reiterated the error count reinforcing to his team that when they had control of the ball they had won the point nearly every time. There then followed a great come back and Brentwood looked shellshocked. 'Castle fought their way back to be 21-19 down and then sneaked past their opponents to get a set point at 25-24. Captain Will Roberts, who was having as poor a game as anyone else had done in the set inexplicably served an error, but 'Castle fought again to take an improbable 28-26 win to retain their 100% home record.

The second set was much more what 'Castle had hoped for from the start as the team played a much more steady game, leading 8-5 and 16-10 at the technical time-outs. McKellar was on fire at the net, killing the ball 4 out of 5 times he was fed at the net and proving a real menace. Shenton was also really coming into his own too, particularly impressive on the back-court 'pipe' attack which Brentwood just could not stop, but also with a number of huge blocks that sent the ball vertically down on the opposite side of the net. Although by no means a vintage set, it went to 'Castle 25-16.

Shenton and McKellar were again the main threats in the third set, with attack efficiency rates of 80% and 100% respectively. Whilst Brentwood were becoming increasingly engaged with the match officials, 'Castle pulled out a few really classy plays with both Bradbury and Shenton excelling on the pipe. Jenkins then set the ball high and tight to the net for Bradbury to hit cleanly over the block and down onto the 3m line through four. After an altercation at the net involving Shenton and the Brentwood setter, Shenton dispatched his next attack onto the ground in front of the same player in spectacular style, going one better than Bradbury a few points earlier. 'Castle secured the win 3-0 and retain top spot, defeat for London Docklands all but handed 2nd place to Solent but with the south coast team having to play both other members of the top 3, the promotion/play-off places are still very much up for grabs.

Saturday 21st January 2012

Venue: Becon's College, Rotherhithe

London Docklands Vs Richmond

Result: Docklands won 3:0 (25-15, 25-15, 26-24)

London Docklands returned to winning ways at the weekend with a convincing 3-0 win against Richmond. Earlier in the season the two sides had been involved in a thrilling five-set encounter which Docklands edged in the end.

But this time the home side produced a solid and professional performance to strengthen their position in third place.

Docklands couldn't have started stronger as they took an amazing 12-0 lead in the first set. Marc Schaepertoens lead the way with his testing serves and his team mates were scoring all over the court. Richmond must have started thinking if they were ever going to score a point particularly when a spectacular pick-up by Alessandro Galli helped Docklands win their tenth point. The set was effectively already won and that seemed to affect Docklands play as sloppy errors started to creep into their game as Richmond gained confidence. Docklands should have kept their guests in single figures but a valiant fight back saw the set end 25-15 with a Platon Vogiatzoglou kill.

Richmond maintained their momentum from the end of the first set to race into an 8-2 lead in set two. But Docklands didn't panic and Vogiatzoglou produced a series of deceptive serves to pile the pressure back on Richmond's fragile passing unit. Richmond coach David Rijvers called a time-out at 8-7 but the damage had already been done and Docklands were back in their groove. Blocks by Alex Gaitan and Tom Wenzel strengthened Docklands' position and three aces by Matthias Gilch helped the home side into a 16-12 lead. There was no looking back for Docklands as they ran out winners 25-15 with another Gaitan block closing out the set.

The third set was much more competitive. Richmond again took an early lead, forcing Docklands' coach Danny Primus to call a time-out 12-9 down. His side regrouped and good work by Galli and Vogiatzoglou narrowed the gap. An ace by Pawel Stankiewicz took Docklands ahead for the first time in the set at 14-13 and two Gaitan blocks extended their lead at the second technical time-out. Given previous evidence Docklands would have been expected to pull away for the victory but Richmond dug in and blocks by Anton Kornilov and Robert Pawlikowski kept them in it. The set got to 20-20 and the two sides began to trade points until Richmond gained their first set point of the match at 24-23. Vogiatzoglou saved it for Docklands and then went back to serve. A Richmond error gifted Docklands a match point and a Vogiatzoglou ace took it at the first attempt, 26-24.

Primus said afterwards, "After the disappointing result last week this was a good response from the team. The start of the first set was the best we've played all season, we simply looked unplayable. We will need to produce similar performances in the next few matches to make sure we keep in touch with the top two."

Docklands travel to Brentwood Estonians next weekend seeking to maintain the pressure on Newcastle Staffs and SGTV Solent.

Black Knight: Tom Wenzel

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Saturday 14th January 2012

Venue: Becon's College, Rotherhithe

London Docklands Vs Newcastle Staffs

Result: Newcastle Staffs won 3:1 (25-21, 26-24, 20-25, 25-19)

Newcastle staffs took a big step back towards the top tier of English volleyball with a gritty 3-1 win over title rivals London Docklands. After missing out on promotion last season in the play-off they are now in pole position to make their debut in the Super8s.

After making the perfect start to the season Staffs lost their first match in the league to Solent just before Christmas but have recovered well to remain on top. Outside hitter Adam Bradbury gained his first England cap last weekend and four of Staffs players have just returned from England Junior duty so they are a team on form and hungry for the league title.

Docklands started their first league match without influential hitter Malte Rieger but could finally give a debut to Bruno Lusic-Sakotic after a long lay off. Both sides started confidently with early kills by Docklands' Matthias Gilch and Sam Shenton for Staffs. But it was Staffs who gained the first real lead after a run of serves by Alex Jenkins and led 16-10 at the second technical time out. However, Docklands were not in the mood to let the set go and were back level by 20-20 after good work by Mark Baechli and Alessandro Galli. But a couple of sloppy errors by Docklands let Staffs back in and they took full advantage to take the first set 25-21.

Up until the second technical time out set two looked to be heading the same way with Staffs leading 16-11. However, Docklands picked up their game to steamroller their way back into the set and match. Coach Andy Hopper introduced Alex Gaitan for Lusic-Sakotic and his extra height immediately caused the visitors problems. Docklands earned themselves three set-points at 24-21 and seemed on course to level the match. But suddenly the wheels came off the Docklands train and Staffs battled their way through, over and around the Docklands' block to take the set 26-24. Staffs were unsurprisingly triumphant whilst Docklands hung their heads in shame.

With nothing to lose, Docklands seemed to relax and took the game to Staffs in set three. After a minor altercation through the net fired up Lusic-Sakotic he went on a run of five serves putting pressure back on the Staffs passing unit. The Staffs hitters started to make uncharacteristic errors and Docklands took full advantage. This time Docklands held their nerve and took the set 25-20.

Docklands maintained their momentum into set four and led 8-6 at the first technical time out. But some strong blocking by Bradbury and Iain McKellar put Docklands on the back foot forcing Hopper to call a time out 10-8 down. Docklands managed to stem the tide of Staffs points and drew level at 15-15. The match then went through a disjointed period with both captains approaching the referee to discuss his decisions. Staffs coped better with the disruptions and kills by Shenton and Will Roberts gave the visitors a healthy four-point cushion. Docklands were getting more and more frustrated as the match slipped away from them and Staffs showed why they have only lost one league match all season with a clinical closing out of the set 25-19.

The league is now Staffs to lose and they should go on to claim the league title. Solent will have some say in the matter but it's looking more likely that they, Docklands and Knights will battle it out for second place and the chance for promotion through a one-off match against seventh in the Super8s. Hopper commented after the match, "Our disappointment is clear to see and we know we let a chance go today. Staffs deserved the win but we let them off in the second set and that proved crucial in the end".

Docklands MVP: Alex Gaitan

Saturday 10th December 2011

Venue: Becon's College, Rotherhithe

London Docklands Vs Cambridge

Result: London Docklands won 3:1 (25-21, 25-15, 25-27, 25-21)

London Docklands Volleyball ended 2011 with an unconvincing win over Division 1 strugglers Cambridge. Before the match Cambridge had only won one match all season and are fighting against relegation. So the home side were expected to make light work of their final match of the year.

In the first two sets this seemed to be the case. On court captain Marc Schaeperoens led the way with a mature performance, controlling his offence as well as applying pressure from the service box. Coach Danny Primus was able to rotate his squad and after his side took the first set 25-21, he introduced Alex Gaitan for his first Docklands match since 2009 after his transfer back from Polonia this week. He added another dimension to Docklands' attacking line-up and will be a massive asset in the second half of the season. Docklands led 16-5 at the second technical time-out in set two and coasted to a 25-15 win to take a 2-0 lead.

However, Cambridge were not giving up and led by the experienced Chris Anderson, the visitors took the game to Docklands. Cambridge were 8-3 ahead at the first technical time-out and despite valiant defence by Mohammed Ali Tighsazzadeh, Docklands could not narrow the gap. With Cambridge 18-12 up it looked all over but clever serving by Malte Rieger and Mark Baechli clawed Docklands back into the match. An ace by Baechli brought Docklands back within a point at 18-19 but he had the Docklands bench pulling their hair out when he put his next serve long. The initiative switched back to Cambridge and they earned set point at 24-21 shortly afterwards. This time was Docklands' turn to show some fighting spirit as they saved the three set points. Matthias Gilch had made this possible with a strong run of serves but frustratingly for Primus, his next serve failed to clear the net, presenting Cambridge with another set point. Docklands saved that only for their next serve to go out and Cambridge finally took the set 27-25 with a kill by Remi Doue.

After Primus read his players the riot act before set four his charges responded by taking a quick 4-0 lead. Their momentum stalled slightly when Platon Vogiatzoglou had to go off with cramp but Docklands continued to dominate and led 16-10. With the finish line in sight Docklands seemed to take their eye off the ball and Cambridge took advantage to close the gap, forcing Primus to call time-out still in the lead at 19-17. However, after a series of tense rallies, Docklands came out on top to finish the match with a smash by Alessandro Galli to take the set 25-21.

Primus said afterwards, "There's no doubting that we can win this league but we're not good enough to play below 100% all the time. It was important to win today but the performance was very disappointing. We need to come back next year ready to fight for the title but we need to improve our consistency in order to do that".

Docklands MVP: Platon Vogiatzoglou

Cambridge MVP: Remi Doue

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Saturday 19th November 2011

Venue: Keele University

Newcastle (Staffs) Vs London Knights

Result: Newcastle (Staffs) won 3:0 (25-19, 25-21, 25-21)

This was undoubtedly the toughest match that 'Castle have faced this season, but the fact that their young guns came through it in straight sets shows the character of the squad and their determination to get promoted at all costs. London Knights fought hard throughout the match, attacking with speed and power, but fragility in other areas of their game meant a 3-0 win for 'Castle.

With Yates unavailable to come on court through leg injuries, Ross struggling with his knee, Lovell having had an MRI on his shoulder and Bradbury nursing a shoulder tendon strain 'Castle looked vulnerable and Knights had a great chance to take away their 100% record.

The first set saw 'Castle go out aggressively with Shenton and McKellar making big kills early on from Allen's setting. Saward was also looking effective in the front line playing in the opposite slot and the home team seemed comfortable. As the set went on Knights slowly but surely found their feet with setter, Yamamoto playing an increasingly effective role, and his team managed to stay in touch with 'Castle. There was not enough in the tank for the visitors though and despite what became an almost complacent performance in the final quarter of the set they took it 25-19.

The start of the second set looked great for the home team as some clever switch blocking resulted in a giant wall of Shenton and McKellar going up in front of the visitors' passer-hitter who suffered three consecutive roof blocks, only to squirm the ball off the fingers with his fourth attempt. This was something of a false dawn for 'Castle though, as Knights really went on the offensive and opened up a three point lead soon after the first technical timeout. There were holes starting to appear in the 'Castle block and defence and Knights main hitters began to kill the ball all too easily. The visitors' lead stretched further still, and whilst the score line stabilised giving 'Castle hope more had to be done. Allen had struggled to get a handle on the block on the right side all game and so Jenkins was introduced with immediate impact. Roberts served tactically to force the Knights attack in one direction, as Yamamoto had strangely been replaced by their second setter. Knights didn't quite know what had hit them and responded emotionally complaining at every decision made by the referee despite seemingly innocuous calls being made and within a matter of a few minutes 'Castle had taken the set 25-21 to go 2-0 up.

Looking at Knights' other results this season one thing is clear and that is that they don't give up or see anything as a lost cause. They made a string of further changes which indicated their strength in depth and that they are serious about their ambitions of promotion. Knights dominated the early part of the set and comfortably led at the first technical time-out 8-2. This lead was extended to 17-10 and it looked for to all that the set would be the first 'Castle had lost all season, but 'Castle worked their way back in. Williams came on to serve for his first point in NVL1 - another one off the 'Castle junior development production line, Lovell came off the bench to bolster the passing and defence unit for his first points of the season and Allen was introduced for a two-setter system. 'Castle were then on fire in all departments, defending the floor at all costs and putting Knights under pressure. The London team only had one response - pure emotion, taking out their frustrations on the ball and the officials and their error count began to soar. Jenkins scored two big kills and then served tough to take the set and the match for 'Castle, taking them from 17-21 down to win 25-21.

Saturday 19th November 2011

London Docklands Vs SGTV Solent 1

Result: London Docklands won 3:0 (25-18, 25-17, 25-23)

Baechli serves up a massive win for Docklands by Andy Hopper

On a day that Sky Sports would have called Super Saturday, London Docklands came out on top in the second versus fourth clash against SGTV Solent 1. With Newcastle Staffs (first) and London Knights (third) also facing each other later on in the day, Docklands' victory was crucial in their quest to bounce straight back up into the Super8s. Staffs carried on their remarkable start to the season with another 3-0 win but all Docklands can do is continue winning their matches to stay in touch with the league leaders.

Docklands coach Danny Primus had a full squad to choose from for the first time in five matches and his side made a bright start, leading 9-6 after a deft tip by Platon Vogiatzoglou. However, as Docklands relaxed, Solent upped their game and pressure from the service line drew out three consecutive Docklands' errors and the scores were tied at 11-11. A powerful kill by Solent captain Simon Trueick and an ace by Ivan Vatolik helped the visitors take a 15-12 lead but a towering block by Mark Baechli on Kostadin Stoimenev gave Docklands some momentum and a kill by Vogiatzoglou meant that Docklands only trailed 16-15 at the second technical time-out. After another point by Vogiatzoglou, Baechli went on a run of six serves, piling the pressure on Solent as they saw their first set chances crumble. In the end a block by Malte Rieger sealed the set 25-18 for Docklands.

Solent had a disastrous start to set two after an ace by Marc Schaepertoens and four Solent errors saw Docklands take a 5-0 lead. Docklands didn't let up and punished some slack Solent play to lead 15-6 after another Baechli ace. Solent threatened a comeback with some sharp middle play by Docklands old boy Adam Phillips but Docklands were always in control and a precise kill by Pawel Stankiewicz completed the set 25-17.

Docklands have recently been guilty of relinquishing leads and as Solent went 4-0 ahead at the start of the third set, Docklands' supporters must have been fearing the worst. However, a solid sequence of serves by Matthias Gilch helped Docklands recover to sneak 5-4 ahead. The game remained balanced until two consecutive aces by Bobby Hudson took Solent into the second technical time-out 16-13 to the good. Another block by Baechli sparked Docklands back into life as a clever Gilch hit off the Solent block tied the scores at 19-19. The momentum was all with Docklands and a smash by Tomas Wenzel gave the home side the crucial two point cushion at 23-21. Phillips saved one match point so it was left to Vogiatzoglou to hit the winning point.

Primus said afterwards, "That was our best performance of the season so far but we can still improve. It was a great team victory and everyone played their part".

Docklands now have two weeks to prepare for the long trip to Dewsbury in another critical test. Meanwhile, Solent host Staffs in the next round of league matches, a match they dare not lose.

MVP voted by Solent: Marc Schaepertoens

MVP voted by Docklands: Aaron Robertson

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Saturday 29th October 2011

SGTV Solent 1 Vs Boathouse Dewsbury

Result: SGTV Solent 1 won 3:0 (25-21, 25-19, 25-11)

New boys to the division Boathouse Dewsbury made the longest journey in the league and boasted quality in their squad in the shape of former Sheffield man Anthony Hignett and former GB player Craig Richardson.

Set 1, 25 -21

Dewsbury made a bright start with Craig Richardson putting his mark on the game with good attacks through the middle, going into the first technical timeout it was 6-8 to the visitors. The teams continued to side out and it stayed level pegging up until 17-18. It was here that Solent put their foot on the gas with solid attacks from Renato Silva that put Dewsbury under pressure. The pressure told and Solent came in winners of the first set 25 – 21.

Set 2, 25 - 19

Dewsbury again came out the blocks well, with Anthony Hignett scoring effectively. Solent soon pegged it back though with a run of serves from Captain Simon Trueick and the teams were level pegging at 12-12. Once again Solent looked to pull away towards the latter part of the set with another run of serves, this time from Ivan Vatolik. Good blocking backed this up and none more importantly than a big roof on Dewsbury danger man Richardson courtesy of Solent's Middle Ian Wood. This gave Solent the momentum they needed to finish the set off 25 – 19.

Set 3, 25-11

Solent looked to continue to pile on the pressure in the 3rd set. An uncharacteristic error by Hignett, plus a string of poor passes meant Solent raced into the lead. This was cemented by a big hit through the middle from Player Coach Phillips as Solent's setter Robertson continued to control the pace of the attack. Solent didn't relent and found themselves 21-6 up. This was duly followed by Solent taking their foot off the gas and a mini fight back was led by another ex Sheffield lad Sam Bussey. However the fight back was short lived though and the game finished on an anti climax with a net touch resulting in a 25 -11 win to Solent.

Coach Adam Phillips Comments:

"This was our best performance of the season so far. We knew the talent Dewsbury had with the likes of Hignett and Richardson. They started well in Set 1 and 2 but we fought back and accelerated when we needed to. If you can put a team under pressure cracks soon start to show and that's what we did. The score in 3rd set was a result of good serving. I think we served 2 or 3 out in the whole game, which was a marked improvement on last week's game against Cambridge. I think Dewsbury will be in the mix come the end of the season, they're too good not to be."

MVPs

SGTV Solent – Adam Phillips

Boathouse Dewsbury – Craig Richardson

Saturday 22nd October 2011
Newcastle (Staffs) 1 Vs London Lynx2
Venue: Keele University

Result: Newcastle (Staffs) 1 won 3:0 (25-16, 25-16, 25-16)

Despite a sickness bug that had swept through the squad, 'Castle appeared fighting fit for their fifth NVL1 match of the season. The sides had opposite records with 'Castle looking to defend their 100% start whilst Lynx2 were looking to get on the board for the first time. With England Junior Squad members Karakoc, Dalrymple and Chambers all in the squad for the Londoners 'Castle knew their opponents could not be taken lightly.

Allen started the game with some intelligent serving to pin the visitors' receivers and setter in an uncomfortable position down the 'Castle left channel and after the first few points it looked as though it might be a walkover. Then Karakoc led a mini-charge by the visitors to narrow the gap and 'Castle led 8-5 at the first technical time-out. Coach Lovell urged his team to display more quality and in the next section of the game the home side began to step it up. Allen linked well with both McKellar and Roberts through the middle of the net, but Lynx2 remained just about in touch by the 2nd technical, at 16-9. From this position the set was straightforward and relatively uneventful. Saward replaced Shenton who was struggling with his cold and helped see the set through for 'Castle who won 25-16.

The second set started with tough serving from Lynx2's Mungroo, but 'Castle seized the initiative to lead 8-4 at the first break in play. Shenton clearly benefited from his rest off court as he raced back into action - ending the set with impressive match attacking stats of 10 kills from 15 spikes! Despite the best efforts of the visitors, who were still scrapping and fighting hard, 'Castle began to cruise, a little too much for the liking of their coach and captain, and a few changes were made whilst Jenkins, Ross and Saward were all given an extended run in the set, which 'Castle won again 25-16.

Lovell made wholesale changes to the line-up for the third set, starting with Yates opposite Jenkins, Ross and McKellar in the middle and Sward and Bradbury passing-hitting. This left Bradbury as captain on court and the 20 year old responded admirably, noticeably raising his performance with 8 kills from 15 attacks, and some superb powerful jump serving as well as a solid passing game. However it was the passing of Heath as libero which boosted the team this set, achieving 80% positive and 60% excellent in the receive, allowing Jenkins to utilise the two giants middles Ross and McKellar to great effect. Lynx2 were a beaten team and if it wasn't for 'Castle errors they would have been out of sight early on. Yates made up for a howling error on an overpass to finish the match with an ace, but it was Shenton that was awarded the MVP.

This win leaves 'Castle with a perfect 5 wins from 5, and more impressively 15 sets won and none conceded, however next weekend sees them make the long and potentially tough trip to Colchester to take on Tendring.

Squad: Allen, Bradbury, Heath, Jenkins, Lovell, McKellar, Roberts, Ross, Saward, Shenton, Yates

Coach: Dave Lovell

NSVC MVP: Sam Shenton

Saturday 22nd October 2011

SGTV Solent 1 Vs Cambridge

Result: SGTV Solent 1 Won 3:0 (25-16, 25-23, 25,23)

Cambridge made the long journey down to the south coast to try and put a halt to what has been a great start to the 2011/12 season for SGTV Solent. Although Cambridge seemed to lack squad numbers, they have always proved a tricky outfit led by the experienced Jean Jacquet.

Set 1, 25-16

Solent made the better start of the two teams and pushed to an 8-5 lead going into the opening technical timeout. However coach Adam Phillips was quick to point out 4 of Cambridge's points were the result of direct errors from Solent. Things had to tighten up and the players responded well, with good blocking from middle man Ian Wood they eventually took the 1st set 25-16.

Set 2, 25-23

Cambridge started the 2nd set well, Remi Doue proved to be an effective attacker through 4. They went into a 10-12 lead which prompted Solent to introduce their latest signing Jacek Szafranski from the bench. He was straight into action with a great pick up and a couple of big hits. Solent rallied and took the 2nd set 25-23

Set 3, 25 – 23

The third set proved to be as close as the second. Service errors from both teams made sure of that, but Solent once again seemed to have that little bit left in the tank and Cambridge were forced to call a timeout at 21-20 down. Towards the business end of the set, Solent pushed towards the finish line and despite a service error from new man Jacek Szafranski were in a great position to finish the match at 24-23 up. So it was left to Captain Simon Trueick to side out through 4, which he gladly obliged.

Coach Adam Phillips commented:

“Cambridge were our banana skin last year, but after the first set I was always confident of the win. The decisive factor for me was our strength in depth, we used everyone on the bench today and in particular I was pleased with the impact of Jacek Szafranski. I know Cambridge were without the big Kiwi Chris Anderson, who's a quality 4 hitter and that could have evened up the game a little. A word has to be said for the character of my setter Aaron Robertson too, he came into today's game with a swollen elbow and was a major doubt before the game. It typifies the character we have in the squad at the moment but I was pleased we could get the job done in 3 as I'm not sure he would of lasted much longer. In terms of negatives, there were times in the game where we switched off and there were too many service errors for my liking but that is something for us to take into our next training session. We have a good run of home games at the moment and its important we make the most of that. Now we have earned another win, we can put a line under it and look forward to the challenge of Boathouse Dewsbury next week.”

MVPs

SGTV Solent – Jacek Szafranski
Cambridge - Remi Doue

Saturday 22nd October 2011
London Docklands Vs Tendring
Venue: Bacon's College, Rotherhithe

Result: Docklands Won 3:2 (25-12, 25-22, 22-25, 19-25, 15-9)

London Docklands continued their good run of victories but were made to work by Tendring for their third league win of the season. Docklands started the match with an identical record to Tendring - won two and lost one. With two Docklands old boys in their squad (Alex Porter and Neil Masters) the visitors were certainly up for the match and hoping to repeat their cup quarter final victory of last season. Only three of Docklands' 2011-12 squad were involved last February but revenge was still on the agenda for the east London side.

The match couldn't have started better for Docklands with service pressure and aggressive net play helping them take a quick two set lead. The first set saw all of Docklands' attackers get in on the action as setter Marc Schaepertoens controlled his offence with maturity. The visitors could not handle the variety of Docklands' attack and relinquished the first set 25-12. Docklands maintained their momentum into set two and led 12-8 when Tendring coach Masters took his second time out. Tendring made a mini comeback but Docklands recovered to take the set 25-22 with a kill by Malte Rieger.

At the start of the third set Docklands showed no signs of taking their foot off the gas and again led 12-10 when Masters took a time out. Tendring were not giving up and driven on by new setter Seb Widlarz they clawed their way back into the match. The scores reached 20-20 and the home supporters were expecting Docklands to power onto a three set win. However, Porter had other ideas and delivered a short series of serves to take his team to set point at 24-20. Docklands saved two of them but a smash by Ben Wilson off the block saw Tendring take the third set 25-22.

Docklands coach Danny Primus urged his side to lift their game as visitors Porter and Wilson continued to power their way through and past the Docklands' block. The pressure was beginning to tell on Docklands as three errors in a row gifted the visitors a four-point lead at 16-12. Docklands continued to fight but the lead was too large to overcome and Tendring took the match into a fifth set with a 25-19 win.

Docklands had a dream start to the shoot-out fifth set with a run of serves by Schaepertoens turning the tables on Porter and his team. Docklands were 4-0 in a blink of an eye. The momentum was now all with Docklands and they didn't let go of it this time with blocks by Alessandro Galli and Mark Baechli not allowing Tendring back into the set. Docklands led 8-3 at the change of ends and two quick-fire aces from Rieger took the match further away from Tendring. In the end Docklands took the set 15-9 to secure their third league win of the season.

Primus commented after the game, "We started really well but again we need to learn how to put teams away and finish off matches. Still, this was a very important win and sets us up nicely for the next phase of the season."

Docklands next face another match in east London against Knights on Sunday 30th October at Bethnal Green.

Saturday 1st October 2011
London Docklands Vs Brentwood Estonians
Venue: Bacon's College, Rotherhithe

Result: Docklands Won 3-0 (25-20, 25-23, 25-22)

London Docklands beat Essex's Brentwood Estonians 3-0 in their first home game back at Bacon's College of the 2011-12 campaign.

The first set started with both sides trading point-for-point with neither team really taking advantage. Ironically enough it was Docklands legend Ned Groy (now playing for Brentwood) who rolled back the years by making a diving defensive play that separated both sides in the first set. This gave Brentwood the impetus as they pushed ahead 20-17 with Docklands struggling to deal with James Bernardi's middle attacks. Given some of the loose serves so far, the first set appeared to be a formality until Pawel Stankiewicz stepped up to service line for Docklands. As the serves started to increase in power Brentwood began to tighten up and with every ball that came back over the net Docklands seized the opportunities with Alessandro Galli taking the lead in his new role as outside spiker cleverly rolling the ball to zone 1 and securing the first set for Docklands 25-20.

The second set was close to a carbon copy of the first, again both teams not really being able to edge the other in the game until Brentwood took a slender lead at 12-10 and then again 15-12. With the Docklands coach Danny Primus demanding more from his team the passing unit started to pass with more confidence allowing setter Marc Schaeperteons to find another Docklands new boy Malte Rieger who unleashed a devastating attack through zone 2 allowing Docklands to take the lead for the first time in the set at 19-18. Both sides then continued to trade points with Tobias French (younger brother of former Docklands star Nathan) being the stand out player from the visitors, scoring on the outside - but a loose serve from Brentwood and a masterful power tip from Rieger, allowed Docklands to take the set 25-23.

The third and final set could not have started better for Docklands as they raced to a 7-0 courtesy of some powerful serving by Platon Vogiatzoglou. Despite some resistance from Brentwood, Docklands were in complete control at 13-6. However they did not have it all their own way, Docklands beginning to lose focus triggered the Brentwood fight back. Until finally Stankiewicz managed to block Bernardi to give Docklands match point at 24-23 and then the game.

Coach Primus said afterwards, "The guys have worked really hard the last couple of weeks and I don't think it would be unfair if I said we got what we deserved. We have our first win so now we can build on that for the next game against TH Lynx"

Saturday 17th September 2011
Newcastle (Staffs) Vs London Docklands
Venue: Keele University

Result: Newcastle (Staffs) Won 3:0 (25-19, 25-22, 25-14)

After the disappointment of their play-off defeat at the hands of London Lynx in May, 'Castle returned to NVL action determined to right the wrongs of the previous campaign. Four key players had departed over the summer to play in the Super 8s including; Scott, Goodwin and Ali to Sheffield, libero Roberts to London Malory Eagles and coach Handford has stepped down. This resulted in senior players Dave Lovell and Will Roberts stepping up in the coaching roles and they quickly set about re-building the squad, bringing in Richard Yates, Ryan Heath and Alex Jenkins.

Much of the squad had been in Italy the previous week playing in the Euro Volley Cup as the reigning under 18 men's national champions – these top European matches had clearly stood them in good stead. 17 year old Sam Shenton raced out of the blocks early on to set the pace for 'Castle, hitting high and hard at the net and then getting on a run of jump serves. 'Castle led 8-3 at the first technical time-out and Docklands looked like they were still on the M6, looking a little lethargic. Jenkins had started as setter for 'Castle and the 18 year old was soon getting into his rhythm, opening up spaces for his wing attackers as the home team delighted the 50+ crowd with dynamic attacking play to extend their lead to 16-8. Slowly but surely the London side, whose relegation from the top-flight had resulted in the exodus of the heart of their team, started to wake up – closing the gap slightly to 21-15 through finding gaps in the 'Castle defence. Despite a slight drop-off in their play 'Castle won 25-19.

The home team stuck with the same starting line-up for the second set, but it was the flow of the game from the end of the first set that prevailed early on with Docklands staying in touch with a scrappy phase of play. Despite being 8-5 up at the first technical time-out things were going all 'Castle's way and the London side's block began to function more effectively, with both Bradbury and Shenton suffering shut-outs. The scrappy nature of the game persisted throughout and although 'Castle were showing their quality when in control of the ball, the young team were not quite on their game. Bradbury continued to pass excellently and Yates started to come into his own, peppering the Docklands libero with powerful line shots time and again. Although never under pressure (leading 16-14 and 21-17), the set remained close to the end with 'Castle winning out 25-22.

Setter Sam Allen, who had been introduced to the court towards the end of the second set, started the third, as did Stew Ross in place of fellow 17 year old Iain McKellar – whose own performance had been exemplary with five points from five attacks and strong jump serving. The passing unit of Shenton, Bradbury and Heath remained relatively untroubled by Docklands' - up and down serving gave 'Castle 11 points in the match purely through errors. Allen settled quickly into the action and 'Castle were quickly 8-4 up. A sharp middle attack from Roberts appeared to increase his confidence and he returned immediately to the service line. This serving run took 'Castle past the second technical time-out at 16-8, which was then increased further. A great defensive rally inspired 'Castle's players and supporters alike and the lead raced to 21-12 before the team closed the match out 25-14 for a comfortable straight sets win.

Squad:

Allen, Bradbury, Heath, Jenkins, Lovell, McKellar, Nafioğlu, Roberts, Ross, Saward, Shenton, Yates