

## Triumphant firsts promoted as brilliant badminton season ends

The University of York badminton firsts have won promotion to Northern Conference 1A after a stellar performance away at Durham at the end of last term

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Photos: Alexandru Hristea and George Lowther

**Durham University Men's Firsts 3 - 5 University of York Men's Firsts**  
**University of York Women's Firsts 6 - 2 York St John's Women's Firsts**  
**University of York Men's Seconds 2 - 6 Leeds Met Carnegie Men's Seconds**

The University of York badminton firsts have won promotion to Northern Conference 1A after a stellar performance away at rivals Durham secured the Northern Conference 2B title at the end of last term.

Leading Durham by a solitary point going into the tie, York needed a win or a draw to secure promotion, but it would be no easy task against a team whose only defeat of the season had come in the corresponding fixture last November. And a fantastic showing in the singles by Ed Chuck and Duy Hung Nguyen gave York a 4-2 with two rubbers left and the celebrations began in earnest.

After an immensely successful period spanning several years, the first team have finally achieved a goal that has alluded them in each of the last two BUCS/BUSA seasons - they finished second both times, just outside the promotion spot. This year the determination of the team to rectify their disappointment was evident throughout the course of the season and the result is just reward for a strong group of talented players who have consistently challenged at a high level.

"We knew what we needed to do leading into the match, that win or a draw would be enough to get us through," said York captain, Will Wiseman. "They decided to swap their players around a bit but we kept the same team and, as has been the case all season, it was a very solid effort from the whole team, especially Duy (Hung Nguyen) who played his heart out to take his game against their first player."

Traditionally, York has relied on the strength of the doubles parings of Wiseman and Paddy Clarke and

Ricky Kanabar and John Choi, with the performance in the singles a bonus. But with Durham strengthening their doubles first pair, playing their best player in that matchup and winning both the rubbers against York's firsts and second parings, the tie was decided by the superb form of the lone-rangers in the singles.

"I am very proud of my players and am especially proud of Duy and Ed who delivered the goods when we needed them the most," said Wiseman.

And it was a successful day all round for the university badminton teams, despite not all the teams in action winning. The final badminton fixtures of the BUCS League also saw York women's first team secure second place in the Northern Conference 2B after a comprehensive victory over city rivals York St John, 6-2. The men's seconds managed to secure their place in Northern Conference 3B despite losing to league leaders Leeds Met Carnegie, thanks to a Durham seconds loss to Sheffield.

The women's first team came into their derby match needing just a draw to finish above York St. John, who were placed third, just two points behind York. The team were looking in good nick after a demolition by league leaders Sheffield Hallam in their last match. After the first round of rubbers York lead their foes 3-1, with a stand out performance by the doubles pairing of Captain Laura Rutter and Bekki Moore. The duo won their match 21-5, 21-4 with Laura holding serve for some 16 points in the second set. The victory was wrapped up in the second half of matches, with both doubles pairs winning again and just one loss in the singles. The final score of 6-2 mean that York ended their campaign in second place, five points ahead of St. Johns but some ten points behind the talented Sheffield Hallam team.



Playing on the courts alongside the women's team in the Sports Centre were the men's seconds team, who faced a challenging match against Leeds Met. The teams won a singles and doubles rubber each leaving the scores at halfway 2-2. James Hor battled hard to overcome his opponent in three sets as did the pair of captain Tom Gatenby and Alex Chu fought from a set down to win their rubber with comfort. Form mirroring that of the start of the league meant that the team slipped to a 6-2 defeat in the end, losing all 4 rubbers in the second round of matches.

"The doubles pairs did very well to produce the results they did and were unlucky not to win more," explained singles player Tahir Shetty, who couldn't match the solid form of his previous performances today. All was not lost, as the team narrowly missed out on relegation thanks to Sheffield beating their

Durham seconds counterparts 5-3 meaning that York finished fourth in the league just above the two relegation places. The rubber win difference of just two proving crucial in keeping the seconds up.

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