

Federation of Crown Green Bowls

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National League – April.

Thirty three teams are entered in the Federation National League for this the sixteenth Season since it took its first step onto the national scene in 2001. Four long established associations have departed this Season but four new ones have joined for a net gain of one, the new affiliates being Bradford, Burton, Dudley, Liverpool/St Helens and Southport.

In **Division One** the 2015 Champions, Leeds "A", started the new Season by showing their massive intent and beating a newly promoted and strong looking Middleton team 25 – 7 (441 – 375). Matt Gillies (21 – 6) was the best of two single figure winners for Middleton in their home leg with Gareth Lally (21 – 8) the top scorer for the Leeds away squad whilst over in Leeds Harry Seehra (21 – 5) headed the ten individual home winners and Simon Brown won to eight for Middleton. Promoted last year to the top division along with Middleton the Airedale and Wharfedale team turned in an excellent result against Fylde "A" winning 22 – 10 (435 – 385) with both Joe and Richard Stockdale winning to single figures in Airedale's home leg and Barry Turnbull managing a similar feat for the away team. For Fylde "A" Grant Eckersley was the best of three winners over in Yorkshire whilst at home Paul Wilson had a 21 – 2 result, the best of their seven winners. Coincidentally Middleton tied their home match with Leeds (205 – 205) and Fylde similarly tied their home leg with Airedale (201 – 201). The fifth team in Division One, Halifax & District, had the bye.

In **Division Two** the local derby match between the two promoted teams, Rochdale and Bury, ended in a significant victory for Bury 22 – 10 (444 – 410) considering Bury had finished as runners-up to Rochdale last Season in Division Three. In their home leg Rochdale were off to the worst possible start losing the first four jacks and eventually were to lose four more and concede the home aggregate points. Neil Slater was the best of Rochdale's four winners (21 – 12) and Chris Harris, playing at opening jack set the pace for Bury with a 21 – 8 result. Rochdale's away squad fared better winning six of the individual games with Matt Hargreaves a 21 – 12 winner whilst Paul Atherden won to four for Bury. Last Season Nuneaton and Barnsley tied their match 16 – 16 but this year Barnsley had an emphatic victory 25 – 7 (442 – 385) winning nine games in their home leg and eight games away and picked up all the eight aggregate points on offer. David Poole and Darren Atkinson shared the Barnsley home honours with 21 – 10 wins and Danny Edkins with 21 – 9 was the best of three Nuneaton winners in the first four jacks but the North Midlands team were to have no more away wins. Nuneaton's home team were marginally better winning two of the first four games and then two of the last four with Paul Dennis top scoring with 21 – 5 whilst for Barnsley Sam Day won to nine. Preston "A" had the bye in this division.

In **Division Three** two of the three newly promoted teams, Wallasey and Colne Valley, were quickly into their stride with notable victories, Wallasey beating Mid-Cheshire 22 – 10 (442 – 369) and Colne Valley winners by 21 – 11 (428 – 381) against the third promoted team, Furness. Mathew Gilmore top scored for Wallasey in their home leg winning 21 – 3 and Colin Peters for the visitors had the best result of their five away winners with a 21 – 6 result. Mid-Cheshire's Anthony Hailwood's 21 – 9 win in their home leg was the best of their five whilst Ian Sherbrooke for Wallasey won to five. In Huddersfield the Colne Valley team had an impressive ten home leg wins with Richard Mozley (21 – 5) the best of the three who won to single figures and Stewart Turnbull for Furness top scored with a 21 – 12 result. Martin Barrow at number one jack gave Furness the best possible start with his 21 – 5 win, the best of seven individual home winners, and James Martin for the visitors carded a 21 – 6 result. Ormskirk had the bye in this division.

In **Division Four** North Yorkshire had the better of this particular "Battle of the Roses" with a 19 – 13 (436 – 403) win over East Lancashire. In Knaresborough number one, Mark Reynolds, gave North Yorkshire the almost perfect start winning 21 – 5 but he was their only winner in the first four and Dave Shawforth for the visitors at number two produced the top score of the day for the visitors with a 21 – 7 winning card. Meanwhile in Blackburn East Lancashire edged their home leg with only two points to spare (213 – 211) as the two teams shared the individual points with Peter Graham (21 – 10) tops for the home team and David Spilsbury responding with 21 – 8 for the visitors. South Lakes and South Lancashire have agreed to rearrange their fixture to a future date and Leeds "B" sat this one out with the bye.

In **Division Five** two of the Federation' newcomers, Dudley & District and Liverpool/St Helens, were in opposition and first honours of the Season went to the Northern team with the result Liverpool/St Helens 20 (466) – Dudley 12 (405). The team from the Midlands set off brightly in their home leg with three winners from the first four jacks including Liam King with 21 – 4 their best result and went on to win their home leg by fifteen chalks with eight individual winners. For the visitors Denise Hodge with her 21 – 13 score-line was the best of their four winners. Meanwhile up North the Midlands team were to manage only two individual winners through Ian Head (21 – 20) and Dan Davies (21 – 19) whilst Mark Holden (21 – 4) was the best of the ten winners for Liverpool/St Helens. A third team embarking on their first Season in the Federation were Southport who were meeting Airedale & Wharfedale "B" in yet another "Roses Battle" and were to beat the Yorkshire team by the convincing margin of 21 – 11 (434 – 355). In their home leg the West Lancashire team had ten winners with three of them, Chris Porter, Dave Pritchard and John Shacklady, all to the same score-line 21 – 5, and for Airedale Danny Teale also had a commendable single figure win 21 – 8. Over in Yorkshire Airedale were to win their home leg with eight chalks to spare with Chris Sims at number one winning to five whilst for Southport John Green had easily their best result of the leg 21 – 8. Mon Menai had the April bye.

In **Division Six** eight teams are entered and have been zoned, four from the North West and four from Yorkshire and the Midlands. In the North Western area Bolton and Fylde "B" had a close encounter with both winning their home legs and it was a five chalk difference in overall aggregate which resulted in a 19 – 13 (420 – 415) win for Bolton. Carl Glover for Bolton with a 21 – 5 result playing in the last four of their home leg probably tipped the balance despite a late flourish by Fylde's last four in both legs when they won three games out of the of four at home and shared the wins away. Best for Fylde away was John Foulds with a 21 - 9 result whilst Fylde's home pair of Mark Audin and Carl Martin both won to single figures and Ken Shaw and Les Brown both won to thirteen for Bolton. Also in the North West group Preston "B" had an outstanding win over Rochdale Ladies 29 – 3 (455 – 285) despite the Preston team having had to concede walkovers in two games in their away leg in Rochdale. Whatever happened to travelling reserves? At home Preston had eleven winners with Stewart Nelson a 21 – 3 top scoring and Pam Pemberton for Rochdale was the lone winner for the Ladies. Excluding the two walkovers Rochdale Ladies failed to post another winner in their home leg with Susan Kitson coming nearest with twenty whilst for Preston Steve Worden and Dave Seddon both won to three. There was only one scheduled fixture in the Yorkshire/Midlands group which resulted in a significant win for Bradford 25 – 7 (448 – 363) in their match with Doncaster. At home Bradford had ten individual wins with Paul Kaye their only single figure success (21 – 7) whilst Denise Allin was the best For Doncaster (21 – 13). In Doncaster Rob McGuire 21 – 5 was the best of two single figure winners for the home team and for Bradford Paul Wilczynski and Kevin Wood both won to ten. Burton and UK Police both had byes in this group.

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