



Leicester & District: Relegation fight is tense

Author: Paul Stimpson

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The one remaining relegation place in Division One of the Leicester & District League remains on a knife edge. With Syston Casuals already down three more remain vulnerable: Abbots Road, Desford Village and Unicorn II.

Unicorn's position is much, much, better after two matches in the week. First of all they defeated Syston Casuals, who had John Szostak and Jason Woodfield both still fighting despite facing the drop, and both taking two. But it was Unicorn's Luke Greenfield taking the honours with a match-winning maximum, Joe Kirkup and John Genovese supporting with one a piece, Greenfield and Kirkup the all-important doubles.

Unicorn then faced Knighton Park II in a rearranged fixture and found Karen Smith in absolute sparkling form, winning three and all in three straight. Les Baker won two while George McClurkin took one in a 7-3 victory. It was that consolation point for gaining three sets that might well keep Unicorn up.

They had Greenfield in decent form again, winning two this time, including beating Baker 12-10 in a very crucial early set. Genovese won the other set by squeezing home some close games against McClurkin.

Earlier the Park team, the same three, had theoretically defeated Abbots Road 9-1 but the latter had miscalculated in fielding an ineligible player, rendering the match 10-0 but, more importantly, Abbots also had two points deducted. This means that instead of possibly needing just a draw against Syston Casuals they now need to ensure the win to climb above Desford Village.

Desford lost 8-2 to Electricity firsts, disappointed not to salvage a point, and now have the unenviable task of playing against champions, Unicorn firsts, in their final match when a point would be worth so much.

Against Electricity Richard Hayes won the two, but found David Grundy unbeatable on the night while Chris Brewer and Mat Hobday both supported with two.

Unicorn duly retained their championship title when Garry Knights, George Briskolas and Tim Sheppard defeated Arnesby who were given the doubles, while Knighton Park are runners up after a cracking 9-1 victory over Ajax Wolvey with Chris Rogers and Reza Kiani three apiece, Jack Rogers two.

The promotion/relegation issue between Divisions One and Two can be something of a poisoned chalice, as Holwell Works have shown this season. Last term they were stone bottom in One, all the players around 20% or so. This term they have all but lapped the rest with a perfect record and all the same players now around 85%. Many fear promotion while others feel a sense of relief for a year when going down.

It has been a keen struggle for the second promotion spot in Two behind Holwell and Arnesby II maintained an interest when beating Knighton Park III by 6-4, scuppering the latter's chances.

Rhys Emery has had a fine season in spearheading Arnesby and is just a whisker below 80%, winning all three against the Park, while receiving normal solid support from, in this case, Dave Wagstaff and Bruce Johnson. For KP, Rayan Kotecha and Brajesh Patel both won two.

Regent Sports' promotion chances vanished when they lost 6-4 to Desford Village II, although I don't think they will consider it the end of the world. Neil Matthams took three for Desford, Kevin Parker two while Kevin Sanderson won a brace for Regent, Martin Bolton and Charlie Bateman one apiece.

Syston Casuals could still outstrip Arnesby by winning their final three matches and took the first of them 9-1 against Electricity III. Bob Whittaker and Chandresh Patel both emerged undefeated while Mike James took two, beaten by Russ Pettitt. Syston have KP III and Desford Village II to play, both of whom they defeated first time around.

My Player(s) of the Week this time involves the two Winstanley Wizards' stars who have spearheaded their team to the top of Division Three in great style, this time winning three each and the doubles against Electricity IV, no mugs themselves, for a 7-3 result.

It is nice to see Derek Butt, the oldest player in the league at 84, still gaining maximums as he did in helping Dave Weston (3) and Mick Loach (2) to a 9-1 success for Nomads IV over Fleckney II in Division Five.

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