



Braintree League: Week of surprises

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: April 03, 2018

It was a week for the underdog in the Braintree Table Tennis League, a week when wins in various matches came from unexpected quarters.

The Rayne C – Netts C match in division one was a typical example. Alistair Hill has been having a difficult season by his standards and had won only one of his 21 sets. But it all came flooding back in this match.

Not only did he win his three singles, but he showed the tenacity to hang on when the going got tough as all three of his wins came at deuce in the fifth game – and in all three he had to come back from two games to one down.

He dispatched Keith Martin (11-8, 6-11, 11-13, 11-9, 13-11), Paul Lombardi (6-11, 11-8, 4-11, 11-6, 13-11) and Dean Andrews (11-7, 6-11, 5-11, 11-4, 12-10).

Hannah Pitt continued her current run of form to win two, but two wins from Lombardi and one each from Martin and Andrews, plus the doubles, gave Rayne a draw.

It was Victor Chan's turn to step into the limelight in Black Notley A's 7-3 win over Rayne B. For the first time, he was more successful than Lucy Wang.

Ryan Pitt scored an excellent win over Wang, but he was no match for Chan, who beat him 3-0 (11-7, 11-8, 11-2), as well as winning his other two singles.

Lee McHugh, playing up as a reserve for Rayne A, also outscored his team-mates in a 6-4 win over Netts A. He was the only one to beat Andy Holmes, which he achieved at 12-10 in the fifth, while Matthew Brown won two and Adam Buxton, the team's most successful player this season, won one.

The magic underdog dust did not rub off on bottom team Rayne D, who suffered their fourth successive 10-0 defeat at Netts B.

The theme did, however, continue in division two where for the first time in the two seasons they have been in the same team, Adam Clift won a set where his brother Sean failed. He beat Richard Whiteside in three straight games in Notley D's 8-2 defeat by Rayne E. He also joined Peter Foster to win the doubles.

Earlier, Rayne E had seen their chances of finishing second virtually disappear in a defeat by the same score to Liberal C, who now lead them by a point with two matches to play compared with Rayne E's one.

Once again, things did not go according to the script. Dean Andrews, who tops his team's averages, failed to register while Whiteside and Nick Hasler both beat Garry Fryatt. Jon Fieldsend and Gareth Davies were unbeaten for Liberal.

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