



Braintree League: Rayne aiming to reign in cups

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Rayne E have made it through to two cup finals in the Braintree Table Tennis League.

They will contest the Restricted Knockout Cup final on Thursday and the Handicap Cup in two weeks' time.

Their success in the Restricted semi-final was relatively straightforward, a 5-0 win over Netts D. Dean Andrews, Richard Whiteside and Kelly Yuenyongpknan all won one singles and they added two doubles between them.

They will face Netts E, whose progress was much tighter against Black Notley D. As has so often been the case in the league this season, it was Fred Evans and Joe Meleschko who clinched the win – but only after a struggle.

Meleschko got home against Sean Clift 3-2 (9-11, 11-8, 11-6, 8-11, 13-11), and was also taken to five games by Adam Clift.

Rayne E's semi-final victory in the Handicap Cup came against Notley A, who were not able to pull back their handicaps. Chris Parr came closest to giving them a chance with a win over Whiteside but he was beaten 23-21 in the deciding game by Nick Hasler and Rayne took the rest.

Like the Restricted Cup, the other semi-final was much closer, Netts D having to come from behind to beat Nomads. Netts went from 3-1 up to 4-3 down but wins for Joe Belsom and Max Plumridge in the final two sets saw them through. The final will be held on May 22.

Liberal A, who despite three league title wins in the last four years have never won the Team Knockout Cup, are through to the final after a 5-2 win over Rayne A.

Rayne were 2-1 up after a win in the first doubles and a victory for Steve Pennell over Simon Webber. They came desperately close in the next set when Peter Hayden just got the better of Hector Rogers 14-16, 11-13, 11-8, 11-7, 16-14 and then Liberal clinched the win with another nail-biter, Scott Dowsett this time getting the better of Rogers 11-9 in the fifth.

In the final, being played on Thursday, they will face Netts C, whose passage was even more fraught.

Recently crowned men's singles champion Paul Davison was eligible to play for Netts C as he had not represented the A team in the cup and he duly obliged with two wins in the singles against Notley A.

But he was not able to steer Alistair Hill to victory in the doubles against Victor Chan and Lucy Wang and Notley almost had a foot in the final when they led 4-2.

Netts survived by the skin of their teeth when Hill beat Parr 19-17 in the fifth in the next set. Davison then had to come back from two games to one down to beat Wang and they rounded it off when Hill and James Mullane beat Chan and Parr, again coming back from two games down, winning the last two games 15-13, 11-9.

In the league, a shock heavy defeat for previously unbeaten leaders Liberal A has sparked a feline incursion into pigeon territory.

Apparently cruising to the title, Liberal have left themselves with work still to do after their two-man team crumbled completely against Netts A.

Peter Hayden and Simon Webber, seemingly continuing their lack of form from the individual tournament, both lost to Paul Davison, Terry Dowsett and Andy Holmes and had only the minor consolation of winning the doubles.

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