



## Clacton & District: Kestrels head strong division

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The 2018/19 season of the Clacton & District League began this week and, with a host of ex-top flight players now plying their trade in the second tier, **Division Two** looks to be the strongest and most unpredictable for many years.

Four teams – relegated Windsor Kestrels and the three Brotherhood teams who last season finished in third, fourth and fifth places with just three points separating them – look the likeliest title contenders.

The Kestrels, who retain Colin Beaumont, Graham Bunce and Bob Sawyer from last year's side, give Debra Found the opportunity to play at this level for the first time, and they will expect to be there or thereabouts at the top come next April.

Brotherhood I's Graham Parkes, Paul Alden and Fred Gallone have added ex-Brotherhood C player John Owen to their squad which gives it a powerful look and one which could ultimately prove champion material.

The 'H' side led by Tricia Salter are unchanged and will continue to provide formidable opposition, especially if Woody Fitzpatrick continues his improvement.

And Barry Allen's 'F' team won't be far behind the other three sides – and, should John Andrews who's been assigned to the team, play for the 'F' side rather than merely be used as a Division One reserve, they will prosper even further.

Walton E, who replace two talented teenagers with three experienced middle-agers in Mark Ratcliffe, Gary Stallwood and Mark Gale, should be able to improve on last season's sixth place.

Windsor Buzzards are strengthened by ex-Kestrels' player John Harvey, who won't lose many in this Division, and they will be aiming for a top-half finish.

There's no Kayley Rodriguez or Ollie Rampton for Windsor Magpies this term but they are replaced by another ex-Kestrel, Dave Martin, who should provide the ballast to see the side to safety.

Traditional mid-tablers, Windsor Harriers, are unchanged for a sixth season and, like the brand-new Nomads Bobcats' team of Mike Wellum, Andy Cawley, Eric Lemke and junior Liam Harris, should have enough about them to be secure from relegation worries.

Nomads Jaguars, who keep Kevin Hume, Andy North and Caroline Page from last season's side, welcome back Harry Hawkes to the table tennis fraternity, but they will have to play to their full potential to avoid a bottom-two finish.

All of which leaves promoted Brotherhood G, who are unchanged, facing the proverbial baptism of fire at the higher level and the label of pre-season relegation favourites.

In **Division Three** the two relegated teams, Duncan Dunne's Brotherhood E and Lynette Sparks' Walton D, are both unchanged and the two start as first and second favourites respectively for the title.

Despite Debra Found's absence from the Windsor Penguins' line-up they should still provide good value and, with Darren Bunce on stand-by as a reserve, will be a competitive side at the top.

They same will apply to Nomads Pumas who, with Dave Harris added to their line-up, will be looking to match last season's fourth place.

Brotherhood J's Dan Still, Maci Harvey and Harley Wood are augmented by Shaun Beckham and Morgan Harvey, two players who've played at a higher level but not for a season or two. Should they play with any regularity, they'll win a lot of points at this level.

Dave Wright, Stuart Wilkinson and Bob Jillins of last season's Nomads Leopards are joined by John Wrigley and Vic Little and they will be hoping to nestle nicely in the middle of the table.

Nomads Ocelots retain Sue Lee, Barbara Rhodes, Arthur Wells-Garrett and Martin Cunningham from last season, and add Hazel Blanche and Yasmin Ticquet from the now defunct Caracals.

Meanwhile, Nomads Lynx is a completely new-look side of Doug Green, Mike Vilka, Jill Canning, Norman Jacobs, Roger McNaughton and Dominic Joannou.

There are three brand-new Windsor sides although the Falcons contains only one fresh face, Sandy Lamb, who joins Mark Lamb, Kayley Rodriguez and Barbara Rogers in a family-based team.

The Robins have three new players, plus Angela Barratt in reserve, and Malcolm Caley and Alan Rutledge signed on to help out early-season, whilst Viv Rodriguez leads the Merlins with Ashley Ivell and Diane Self joined by Sharon Gowlett and junior Bradley Henshaw.

\* Five players have still not registered with Table Tennis England. Any matches played by these players will be voided.

\* Team Secretaries are reminded that result cards should ideally be sent to the Press and Records Secretary immediately after the match but by 10am on Saturday morning at the latest in order that the match can feature in the current weekly report.

\* The Windsor and Nomads Clubs are combining to hold a Quiz Night at St Osyth Village Hall on Saturday 6th October, 7.30pm for 8pm start. The cost is £3 per person for teams of up to six. Bring your own drink and nibbles. For details, contact Jenny Higgins (01255 432397) or Gill Locke (07765 405563).

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