



Musketeers put champs to the sword

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Promoted Musketeers lead the way and champions Bribar St Neots Saints are rock bottom in the Premier Division after weekend one of the Veterans' British League at Derby Arena.

Last year's runners-up Market Rasen lead the women's Premier Division, although defending champions PPong are also unbeaten.

[Click here to view images from the weekend on our Flickr page](#), by VBL photographer Melvyn Lovegrove.

Musketeers and St Neots met in the first round of matches and the former put down a marker with a 4-2 victory, despite losing the first set when Jason Ramage defeated Darren Lindley.

Two for Mike O'Driscoll and one each for Andy Dixon and Lindley turned the tide to open a 4-1 lead and give the newcomers the perfect start.

Musketeers went on to have an unbeaten weekend, with three wins and 3-3 draws against XLNT Draycott and Foresters A, while O'Driscoll ended with a 90% record, his only defeat coming at the hands of Foresters' Ritchie Venner.

Foresters were also unbeaten – though, remarkably, without picking up any victories as their five draws see them in third place, three points behind Musketeers and one behind PPong Vets, who won two and drew two.

St Neots, champions for the last five seasons, endured a miserable weekend and lost two further matches, against PPong and Draycott to finish on three points, level with Butterfly-Eck but bottom on game difference.

The women's Premier Division has Market Rasen on nine points courtesy of four wins and a drawn match against PPong. The champions also dropped points against Bribar Failand and newcomers MK Girls, but remain unbeaten on seven points, in third place behind Failand on games difference.

The match between champions and challengers took place in the final round, and Market Rasen came from 3-1

down to bag a point, courtesy of Lesley Keast beating Elaine Sayer in four and Jane Vickers seeing off Sarah Short in three straight.

Sara Williams of PPong won all eight of her matches to top the divisional averages, alongside Vickers, who had 100% but from only four ties. Vickers' Market Rasen team-mate Keast had 8/10, as did Sue Collier of Failand.

Women's Division 1 leaders are Bribar IPS Tigers, who won four and drew one to lead the eight-team league by three points from a trio of teams on six.

However, having beaten two of those teams (Ellenborough and Wheelers Fusion Of Ladies) and drawn with second-placed Five Counties, they have all but guaranteed topping the division. Tigers' Jo Keighley topped the averages with 9/10.

Division 2 is tighter, with Foresters leading the way with nine points, one ahead of Ashford (W3 D2) and Cippenham (W4 L1).

Foresters' drawn match was against Ashford, who three times came from a match down to force the draw. Cippenham had won their first four matches but came unstuck 5-1 against Ashford. Foresters versus Cippenham – in the first round of matches of Weekend Two on February 23 – looks like a pivotal match.

Three players in Division Two still boast impressive 100% records – Lisa Sprackling (Ashford) and Sarah Jane Hilditch (Foresters) from 10 matches each and Carrie Cope (Billswood) from eight. Foresters' Sue Pingram was just behind with 9/10.

In the lower men's divisions, there were no unbeaten sides in Division 1A, where Topspin Fusion lead the way by two points, having won four and lost to Norwich in the final round of matches.

Tom Cutler was the outstanding player in that division, winning all 10 of his matches to comfortably top the averages, with none of the other ever-present players picking up more than 7/10.

In Division 1B, The Rams are unbeaten, their only dropped point coming in a 3-3 draw against Redland Bats, and lead by a point from Team Ecosse.

There was another 100% individual record in this division, a perfect 10 for the leaders' Garry Knights.

XLNT Draycott III and St Georges cannot be separated in 2A, having won four matches each and drawn their tie 3-3, a match which saw the latter fight back from 3-0 down to claim a point, Ryan Stockham, Mark Jackson and Simon Griew cancelling out the lead opened up by Ben Willson, Alan Cherry and Mohammed Shabir.

That was the only defeat for Shabir, who tops the averages with 8/9, just ahead of Griew and Cherry who both took seven from nine.

Bribar Failand won three and drew two to lead Division 2B by two points from Foresters C. Dave Savage had a 100% record for the leaders, albeit from six matches rather than the full 10. Sherwin Remata (London Moberley) and Mark Romano (XLNT Draycott II) both had eight from 10.

Two unbeaten sides lead 3A – PSP Insurance and Norton Commandos both having won three and drawn two, while Pudsey recorded an identical record to hold the halfway lead in 3B.

Kevin Edwards (PSP) had 10/10, while the leading averages in 3B belonged to Sujay Jagannathan (Ashford) and Tim Dyson (Pudsey) with 9/10.

The eight-team Division 4A and 4B tables also see the leaders with identical records – Joola Plymouth in 4A and Sycamore Zigabytes Vets in 4B winning three and drawing two. Corby Smash are also unbeaten in 4B, with two victories and three drawn matches.

There were four 100% records in 4A, although the only one to play the full 10 matches was Paul Giles of Plymouth. Steve Brunskill of Swerve had 100% from 10 matches in 4B, one ahead of Zigabytes' Michael George.

The weekend started with a minute's silence in memory of former VBL Administrator and Organiser Gill Smith.

The raffle raised £568.40 in aid of Pink Pong, with thanks to all who donated prizes and to 13-year-old Susanne Baldwin and Brian Harradine for a brilliant job selling the tickets.

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