



## Braintree League: It's tight at the top

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Unusually for this stage of the season, positions are extremely tight at the top of all three divisions of the Braintree Table Tennis League.

Two points separate the top two in division one and there is only a one-point difference in the other two divisions.

The gap at the top of the first division is a slightly false one as Rayne A have played one match more than Liberal A but the two teams more or less matched each other last week, Rayne winning 8-2 and Liberal 9-1.

Rayne's win was the more intriguing as it included a rare defeat for former men's single champion Steve Kerns.

Kerns took a year out of the game two seasons ago and then chose not to play in Braintree last year but he had lost only three times in 54 sets in his previous two seasons. This time it was Adam Buxton who got the better of him 3-0 (13-11, 13-11, 11-7).

Steve Pennell came close to matching him when he led two games to one and succumbed only at 13-11 in the fourth and 11-9 in the fifth. Kerns also beat Alan Burgess to give BNCA A two points.

Liberal's win was over Rayne B, where Hector Rogers' win over Simon Webber was the one that got away.

Netts B stay in third place after a 9-1 win over BNCA B while Netts A move above Liberal B into fourth following a 10-0 win over Rayne C. Liberal B were held to a draw by Netts C, Andrew Huckson holding Liberal together with an unbeaten evening.

Netts D's lead in division two was also cut by a point when they beat Nomads 9-1 while second place Liberal C took all 10 off Felsted RBL B.

Third-placed BNCA C slipped back when they were kept at bay by Rayne E's Dave Marsh, whose three singles helped his team to share the points.

Rayne D, who are fifth, moved closer to BNCA D, one place above them, by beating them 6-4. But none of them could find an answer to the problems posed by Sean Clift.

The performance of the week came from Notley E, who beat Felsted A, three places above them, 7-3 – and in particular from Takunda Nerutanga, whose three wins included an excellent victory over Jarek Pietraszuk.

After being knocked off the top the previous week, Notley F returned to the summit of division three after beating their own G team 8-2. Declan Baines and James Gronland were unbeaten.

Last week's leaders Notley I fell from grace with an 8-2 defeat at the hands of Netts E, who jump above them into second place. Peter Hardy, playing up from the F team, was unbeaten for Netts.

Rayne F, with a match in hand, are fourth, but they were held to a draw by their own G team, thanks largely to Tim Townsend's three singles.

Daniel Farquharson and Jack Cains, both 13, were the stars of Netts F's 7-3 win over Rayne I, both remaining unbeaten for the first time in their league careers.

At the other end of the scale, the most notable feature of Rayne H's draw with Notley H was the fact that the total age of the six players was 431, two good illustrations that table tennis is a game for all ages.

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