



Briantree League: Lewis' long run comes to end

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Nomads' stalwart Ken Lewis has tasted defeat in the Braintree Table Tennis League for the first time in nearly three years.

Lewis, a former high-level division one player, now represents Nomads as the nearest club to his home in Hadleigh, and has largely been untroubled in division two since losing to Dave Punt in December 2015.

Then up stepped Felsted RBL A's Jarek Pietraszuk. Lewis beat Pietraszuk in their first meeting in September but second time round the scores were almost exactly reversed, Lewis winning the first game but losing the next three, just as Pietraszuk had earlier. The winning scores this time were 7-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-5.

Pietraszuk won his other two singles to give Felsted only their second victory in eight matches by 6-4.

Elsewhere in division two, leaders Netts D's unbeaten run of eight matches was brought to a halt by Rayne D, who beat them 6-4.

It was their third defeat of the season and each time they have had only two players. Richard Whiteside's victories over both Jan Fuller and Joe Meleschko tipped the balance.

Liberal C are now equal top with an identical record to Netts D's after an 8-2 win over Rayne E. Keith Flowers had good wins over both Gareth Davies and Frank Neill but found Garry Fryatt's defence too solid to breach.

Black Notley C had a 10-0 win over Felsted B while Notley's D and E teams fought out a draw.

The E team, who lost four of their first five matches, have now gone four without defeat, while the D team, who won four of the first six, have gone four without a win.

In division one, Rayne A had their lead cut by one point when Liberal A's 9-1 win over Notley B was one better than their 8-2 result against Rayne C.

It was a match they would surely have expected ten points from but Dave Miller and Paul Wellington had other ideas, with excellent wins over Alan Burgess and Steve Pennell respectively.

Robert Wood remained unbeaten in Netts A's 7-3 win over Notley A as did Colin Bennett for Netts B against Liberal B. But in his case it was not enough – Liberal won 6-4.

The last time Netts C faced Rayne B they triumphed 7-3, but this time the scoreline was reversed, a result which had much to do with the fact that Ian Whiteside was making his first appearance of the season for Rayne B.

The stand-out performance of the week in division three came from 18-year-old Jamie Brooks. Having not lifted a bat in earnest since the end of last season, he stormed through the Rayne F team to give Notley G an unlikely draw against the promotion favourites.

That included a straight-games win over Brian How, top of the division's individual averages at that point.

Second-placed Notley F were not able to take advantage and tumbled to a 7-3 defeat at the hands of their own I team. New signing Graham Chinnery joined Peter Pond in the unbeaten enclosure.

Netts E opened up a seven-point gap at the top after enlisting Clive Forster's help for the second time this season. His three singles helped them to an 8-2 win over Rayne G.

Rayne H beat Rayne I 10-0 while teenagers Mia Charles and Jack Cains were unbeaten in Netts F's 9-1 win over Notley H.

* Table tennis was in mourning this week after the death of Rayne C player Steve Siggs while playing in a match. Steve, who was 66, collapsed and died while playing in the Brentwood League.

The tributes that have arrived from club-mates and opponents have all struck the same theme – 'a thoroughly decent man, hugely respected by his opponents', 'a true gentleman of our sport, a lovely man on and off the table', 'a pleasure to play with and against.'

Steve was one of a number of players in the Braintree League who gave up the game for a long period but returned to it with renewed vigour.

Having been a promising junior in the Chelmsford League, where he reached the junior boys' final, he stopped playing a few years later, after reaching division one, but made a comeback after nearly 40 years out of the game.

He first played in division three in Braintree in the 2013-14 season but soon proved to be too strong for that environment and moved up to division two in 2014-15.

He won only 28 per cent of his sets in his first season in division two but made huge strides to win 59 per cent the following season and then, with 62 per cent in 2016-17, he helped his team to the division two championship.

He opted out of going up to division one the next year but agreed to make the jump this year where he had put in a number of good performances.

In the words of his team-mate Dave Miller: "He was playing the best table tennis I have seen him play recently and was troubling the top players. A lovely man and a great team-mate."

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