



Clacton & District: Panthers on course to retain title

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Posted On: January 02, 2019

With the second half of the Clacton & District League season resuming shortly, there are still plenty of issues to be settled.

In Division One, reigning champions Nomads Panthers head the table by 10 points and, with James Denyer showing impressive form, remain favourites to take a seventh consecutive title.

But the Panthers have suffered defeat at the hands of both the chasing teams, Windsor Condors and Brotherhood C who, in Colin Stallwood and Greg Green for the Condors, and Andy Warner and Kevin Gowlett for Brotherhood, possess players of the highest quality. Both teams will still harbour title ambitions of their own – but they'll need to field their strongest teams to counteract the Panthers' all-round strength.

Walton A are only four points further adrift and, whilst perhaps not having a title-winning pedigree, could well be in contention for the runners-up spot. Daniel Young's form has been a revelation in the first half-season whilst Gavin Price's return to the table tennis table has been the most heart-warming occurrence of the season so far.

Andy Vincent and Gary Cattermole have been in excellent nick for Windsor Hawks and Windsor Eagles respectively and both teams should continue to feature in the top-half of the table. Walton B and Nomads Lions are not far behind but seem to be involved in their own personal battle for seventh place.

Peter Burrows has been Walton B's go-to player which has kept them out of the drop zone, where Nomads Tigers and Brotherhood D are fighting it out to avoid joining Lawford who are becoming detached at the bottom.

Brotherhood I have proved the quality team in Division Two and they, together with Brotherhood H, look to have the all-round talents to take them to the one-two positions at the end of the season.

Walton E's top trio of Ratcliffe, Stallwood and Gale are a match for anyone in this Division and are deservedly in third spot ahead of Windsor Kestrels and Nomads Bobcats, for whom Liam Harris has shown impressive form in

his first season at this level.

Brotherhood F are the only team in the League to have played the same three players – Barry Allen, Lee Allen and Shaun Beckham – in every match and their consistency has seen them achieve a solid mid-table position ahead of Windsor Buzzards, bolstered by the inclusion of new-signing John Harvey.

At the bottom, Windsor Magpies have been grateful to Dave Martin for chalking up a goodly percentage of their points and they stand ahead of Windsor Harriers who find themselves in an unaccustomed relegation battle with Brotherhood G and Nomads Jaguars.

The clearest picture would appear to be at the top of Division Three where Brotherhood E, with a lead of 19 points at the halfway stage, are surely uncatchable, Tony Edmonds unexpectedly emerging as their most successful player.

But the destination of the second promotion place is as open as it could be, with just eight points covering the next six teams.

Mike Vilka's form has seen Nomads Lynx rise up the table where they currently hold second place, having played a game more than their rivals, but they may not have the back-up quality to maintain the challenge.

Last year's runners-up, Windsor Penguins, with Alan Charman again leading the way, will be there or thereabouts come April, as will the always-reliable Nomads Pumas, boosted this season by Dave Harris.

Bob Jillins' good form has helped Nomads Leopards establish themselves in the top six whilst newcomer Tony Sharman is proving a useful recruit for Walton D.

But don't rule out the chances of Brotherhood J, the youngest of the challenging teams, whose youthful improvement could yet spring a surprise or two.

The remaining four teams are currently involved in a mini-league of their own at the bottom.

Windsor Falcons have relied heavily on Kayley Rodriguez for their points whilst Nomads Ocelots have been grateful to their number one player, Arthur Wells-Garrett, despite him having played just a handful of matches.

Windsor Merlins are the only team in the Division without a victory, despite Sharon Gowlett's presence, whilst Windsor Robins, who've been beset by player-availability problems in the first-half season, will certainly be hoping for a smoother – and more successful – second half.

* The League has been saddened to learn of the death, just before Christmas, of long-serving player John Long. A full tribute will appear later.

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