



Braintree League: Crouchman wins battle of champs

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The first meeting of the season between Braintree Table Tennis League's last two men's singles champions has gone the way of the 2017 winner Brandon Crouchman.

His win over Paul Davison was the current champion's first defeat of the season. Crouchman triumphed 3-1 (8-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-5) this time round to make it four wins out of four over the last four seasons, having won in the league last season and in 2015-16 as well as a nail-biter in the 2017 men's singles semi-final that he took at 14-12 in the fifth game.

The win came in Liberal A's 6-4 victory over Netts B, a match in which Liberal had to field a reserve but came through after Crouchman and Simon Webber won the six points between them.

Their only blemish was Webber's defeat by Davison although Webber had to dig deep to beat Maria Boulton after losing the first two games.

The result meant that Rayne A, who beat Black Notley B 10-0, moved four points closer at the top.

Netts B's defeat means they drop below Liberal B, who had a 7-3 win over Notley A. All three Liberal players lost to Victor Chan, who was unbeaten for the fourth match running.

Netts A are nestled in between after an 8-2 win over Rayne B, where Robert Wood was unbeaten.

Rayne C are now level on points at the bottom with Notley B after taking two sets from Netts C, Dave Miller and Paul Wellington scoring good wins over Alistair Hill.

In division two, Netts D's lead was cut to three points when they took only six points from Felsted RBL A while second-placed Liberal C beat Notley E 8-2. Patrick Gilbert led the way for Netts where Richard Baxter and Jarek Pietraszuk won two each for Felsted.

At Liberal, it was Dave Hardy who hit top form. After a fairly fallow period, he showed his team-mates Jon Fieldsend and Garry Fryatt the way home when he was the only one to beat Takunda Nerutanga, the first time he has outscored his team-mates since his comeback two seasons ago.

Rayne D also made up ground with a win by the same score against their own E team, where Kelly Yuenyongpknan was the only person to beat Keith Flowers.

Tim Huxtable was another player to rise unexpectedly to the occasion when he outscored team-mate Steve Noble in Notley C's 7-3 win over Nomads. Kevin Saunders won twice for Nomads but Huxtable found a way past him in four games.

The top four teams have opened up a big gap over the following pack, which is led by Notley D after their 7-3 win over Felsted B.

The lead in division three, which has changed hands regularly all season, is back with Netts E after their 10-0 win over bottom club Rayne I while last week's leaders Notley F were beaten 6-4 by Rayne F.

Notley included Warren Baines for the second time this season, but he was comfortably beaten by Brian How. How did not finish the evening unbeaten as he was found wanting by Mel Cooch for the second time this season. Cooch in turn lost to Dave Allinson, who was beaten by Warren Baines.

Notley I are now only three points behind their F team after an 8-2 win over Notley H while Matt Brooks and Jim Davy took all the points in Notley G's 7-3 win over Rayne H.

Netts F's win over Rayne G – only their fourth of the season – owed much to Peter Hardy's three singles, but mention should also be made of the two Netts newcomers, Kath Little and Davina Brazier, who both won a singles, in Little's case her first in the league.

The league's annual quiz night was won by a team formerly captained by Steve Siggs. The team were playing in honour of their former team-mate who died in December.

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