



Braintree League: Unwanted history for Netts

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Apart from a six-year break, Netts A have been a major figure in the Braintree Table Tennis League since their formation in 2000.

They have been in or around the top of the first division in all that time and have lifted the trophy three times. What they had never done is lose 10-0 – until now.

This year's Netts A does not have the clout of most of its predecessors and has largely been vying with its own B team – and Liberal B – for the unrewarded honour of third place.

Their defeat by champions Liberal A, therefore, could not be described as a major shock, but still takes some time to sink in.

The result looked unlikely this time too as the Netts team included James Hicks, who had won all three singles against the same opponents in the first phase of the season.

He came close to repeating the dose but Simon Webber just got home 3-2 (7-11, 12-10, 6-11, 11-9, 12-10), Brandon Crouchman came close to a straight-games defeat but eventually prevailed in five (6-11, 11-13, 11-9, 11-3, 11-7), and Scott Dowsett won slightly more comfortably 3-1 (11-9, 9-11, 11-8, 11-7).

The defeat means that Netts' B team moved back above the A team after their 6-4 victory over Black Notley A, where Maria Boulton was unbeaten.

Rayne A remain nestled in between them after a 10-0 win over Netts C while Liberal B kept up their unexpected challenge for third place – they finished sixth last year – with an 8-2 win over Rayne C.

In the other match in the division Paul Lombardi was unbeaten as Rayne B beat Notley B 7-3, the first time he has outscored his team-mates this season.

The top of division two remains as tight as ever with wins for the top three sides, but a surprise defeat for fourth-

placed Notley C. They lost 6-4 to their own D team, despite three wins from Glen Laing.

Leaders Liberal C had a 7-3 win over a two-man Felsted RBL A while two-man Netts D beat Rayne E 6-4.

Rayne D fared best of the leading bunch with an 8-2 win over Felsted B, although Nick Butler will be pleased with his wins over Kelly Yuenyongpknan and Nick Hasler.

Nomads turned out a strong team against Notley E where Takunda Nerutanga's win over Kevin Saunders was the only blemish.

Of the seven matches played in the first round of the handicap cup, four were won by Rayne teams and three by Notley teams.

Two more Notley teams had walkovers while four Rayne teams and one Notley team had byes, which means a second round with just one team from outside the biggest two clubs – Liberal C, who had a bye – unless Felsted B win their tie against Notley A, which is due to be played this week.

Perhaps the most eye-catching result was the appearance of Rayne J, a team of reserves entered only in the cup. Ian Whiteside (three wins), Gauthier Chevallier (2) and Dave Whiting (2) beat Liberal B 7-2.

Notley I and Rayne G took advantage of their handicaps to overcome teams from a higher division. Notley I beat Rayne B 6-3 (three wins for Elliot Game) while Rayne G overcame Notley E 5-4, despite Takunda Nerutanga's three wins for the losers.

In a division two battle, Notley D came past Nomads 6-3, with three wins each for Adam Clift and Peter Foster, while division three's Rayne F had a 7-2 win over another division three team, Notley G, where Dave Allinson was undefeated.

Rayne A are the only first division team to win through, although they had to work hard against Netts F, who stretched them to 5-4. Lee McHugh was unbeaten.

Notley C flew the flag for the second division when they overcame division three's Netts E 5-3.

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