

Clacton & District: Condors through in cup classic

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In a match worthy of the Cup Final itself, Windsor Condors made it through to the semi-finals of the Handicap Knock-Out Cup of the Clacton & District League when they edged out fellow-Division one side Nomads Tigers 5-4.

In a four-hour marathon quarter-final encounter, the result was in always in doubt, with the score alternating throughout the contest, the Condors trailing 2-1, then leading 3-2, trailing again 4-3 before winning the final matches in two nail-biting five-setters.

The first four matches of the evening were shared between the teams before the Condors nudged ahead thanks to a topsy-turvy doubles win. Windsor's Colin Stallwood and Ollie Rampton (-6) initially overwhelmed Pawel Szemro and Daryl Lott (+2) who could hardly get a ball on the table before the Tigers' pair launched an equally devastating recovery in the next two sets, only for the Condors to snatch it 3-2 (11-2, 11-6, 3-11, 3-11, 12-10).

The Nomads' side levelled as Szemro (+2) beat Mel Rampton (-5) 3-1 (11-8, 11-7, 6-11, 11-7) before Tigers' skipper John Marshall (+3), leading from the front, beat Colin Stallwood (-8) 3-2 (11-5, 10-12, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6) to put his side on to the verge of a memorable victory.

But the Condors fought back with Ollie Rampton (-8) scraping past a valiant Daryl Lott (+1) 3-2 (11-2, 9-11, 4-11, 12-10, 11-8) in an exhilarating, high-quality contest of counter-hitting.

And so to the final doubles where the Tigers looked as though they would grab the glory after taking the first two sets with ease. But the Condors' pair of Stallwood and Mel Rampton (-8) exerted pressure in the next three to take the honours 3-2 (1-11, 2-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-6) against the brave challenge of Szemro and Marshall (+2).

"It was one of the most competitive and see-sawing matches I've ever played in" commented the Condors' number one, Colin Stallwood, after the match. "Definitely one of the best Cup matches I've been involved in."

So the Condors make their way to the semi-final where they will meet club-mates and fellow-Division One side Windsor Eagles who overcame Division Two strugglers Brotherhood G 5-2 in their quarter-final tie. However, it was not an easy passage for the Eagles who could be forgiven for looking anxious when the Brotherhood side took an early 2-1 lead. But the experienced Eagles' trio of Gary Cattermole, Phil Smith and Sue Welham took the tie by the scruff of the neck, Cattermole leading with an unbeaten performance and Smith taking his two singles.

In the other semi-final, Nomads Lions, 5-2 winners over Brotherhood E, the last remaining Third Division side in the competition, will face Brotherhood I. Jason Lloyd's recent good form continued, staying unbeaten for the Lions in his doubles and two singles, whilst Ethan Lloyd won both his singles.

A Brotherhood side from Division Two was guaranteed a place in the semi-finals, and the Brotherhood I v Brotherhood F encounter produced another close match and another late-night finish, the 'I' team eventually taking a hard-fought 5-3 victory. Five of the eight matches went the distance and, crucially, the 'I' team took four of them. The two closest matches saw John Owen (-5) beat Barry Allen (+1) 3-2 (14-12, 6-11, 0-11, 13-11, 14-12) and Paul Alden (-5) claw his way back from a disastrous start to beat Shaun Beckham (+1) 3-2 (3-11, 0-11, 13-11, 11-6, 13-11). Graham Parkes sealed his side's success with an 11-4 in the fifth victory over Beckham in match eight. Somewhat perversely, Lee Allen of the 'F' team was the only player to remain undefeated on the night, unbeaten in his one doubles and two singles.

* This week also saw the semi-finals of the Division Three Handicap Challenge and Brotherhood E made up for their elimination from the Knock Out Cup with a narrow 5-4 victory over Nomads Leopards. The match-score see-sawed throughout, the Leopards leading 2-1 and 3-2 before Brotherhood took over and led 4-3. The

Leopards won match eight to take the tie into a decider where Duncan Dunne and Tony Edmonds (-3) beat Bob Jillins and Dave Wright (+1) 3-1 (11-6, 6-11, 11-9, 11-6).

In the final, Brotherhood E will meet Windsor Penguins who were 5-0 winners against Nomads Pumas who, through holiday and work commitments, were unfortunately only able to field two registered players. The Penguins, therefore, needed just one point to take the tie but it turned out to be a tight one, Alan Charman (-1) defeating Lionel Goddard (+1) 3-0 (11-9, 11-8, 25-23).

The final will be played on a date to be arranged.

* The only League match played was in Division Three where Nomads Lynx maintained their position on the fringes of the promotion race with a 7-3 success against Walton D, Mike Vilka and Dominic Joannou taking hat-tricks. But the score-line could easily have been 7-3 in favour of Walton, with the Lynx winning the four matches which went close in five. Vilka edged out Tony Sharman 11-8 in the decider whilst all three of Joannou's wins went to the wire, beating Toni Hayhow-Khan 11-9 in the fifth, and both Sharman and Lynette Sparks 12-10 in the fifth.

* The closing date for entries for the Closed Championships, sponsored by Paul Newbould Planning and Building Design Services, is rapidly approaching. All entries must be in by Saturday 23rd March. Entry forms should be completed on-line, or sent by post, to either Tony Oswick or Peter White. The tournament takes place on Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th April at the Coastal Academy Sports Hall. The qualification for entry is six League matches.

RESULTS

Handicap Cup Round 4

Windsor Condors 5 Nomads Tigers 4

Brotherhood G 2 Windsor Eagles 5

Brotherhood F 3 Brotherhood I 5

Nomads Lions 5 Brotherhood E 2

Division Three Handicap Challenge Semi-finals

Nomads Pumas 0 Windsor Penguins 5

Nomads Leopards 4 Brotherhood E 5

League

Division Three

Walton D 3 Nomads Lynx 7

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