



Be TT: Pairs League is perfect for youngsters

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Leicester league recently ran a new starter short format league with great player feedback. The league committee and Harry White, the League Development Officer, were keen to support new players into the league and experience competitive table tennis for the first time.

Harry worked closely with Table Tennis England staff and brought together a Be TT project plan for the new exciting league format. After a two-week trial the format was agreed with the players clubs and coaches involved.

The project was to run for four weeks initially every Friday evening from 6.30pm-8.30pm as a pairs league, and most teams entered had two or three players for each team at a cost of £5 per team for the full four weeks.

The format was best of three games to 11 points with no deuce, so if players reached 10-10 the next point would be the winner of the game. In each match, every player played against each other, with a doubles game at the end ensuring an odd number of games so each match always had a winning team.

Eight teams entered, split them into two divisions, and the last week saw all teams progress to quarter-final stages when teams in Group A played those in Group B and vice versa.

Winning teams went into the Premier semi-final and losing teams into the Championship semi-final then ongoing to finals matches or third and fourth place play-off matches, so all teams were playing right to the end of the competition.



The Premier League Leicester TT Trophy winners were New College, pictured with League Development Officer Harry White



The Championship League Leicester TT medal winners were Team Mantis

For the majority of players it was their first experience of playing organised competitive table tennis and valuable experience was gained on how to score games and learning the rules for doubles games. Each match was organised by the two competing teams taking it in turns to score games – local club volunteers supported the new players with this and provided scorecards that help them feel it was an official league.

Feedback has been great and all players are keen to continue playing and compete again from their first taste of the new short format league. Here are some of the comments made by players:

“Great to have the opportunity to try something new.”

“Sessions were always active and a great way to compete against each other.”

“Fun! I met new people and learned new things.”

“Gives me something to do on a Friday night.”

“Great fun and I feel like I’m improving at something.”

“It took me until the last week to actually win a game but felt amazing.”

Harry White, Leicester League Development Officer, said: "We would highly recommend setting up this type of league to help encourage more juniors and beginner players to start playing regular table tennis competition.

The support from Table Tennis England and the Be TT programme helped us get the ball rolling and establish the new league. Support from local clubs was great rather than just working individually."

Mark Willerton, Table Tennis England Development and Volunteering Officer, added: "It's great to see a local league working together with clubs and volunteers and having the courage and energy to try new things. Leicester already has a very successful junior league but with this new league we attracted brand new competitive players."

The winning team was two boys from a local college who hadn't been in this country for long. Both players each week had to make their own way across town, borrowing equipment to play.



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