



Clacton & District: Panthers are oh so close

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Nomads Panthers are Division One champions of the Clacton & District League – almost.

James Denyer, Gill Locke and Colin Webber, all members of the six title-winning Panthers' sides of the last six years, were unavailable for their team's match against Walton C and so the Panthers were forced to field a guest.

Despite that, they still won 7-3, with Paul Hume and John Hatley unbeaten. But their inevitable march to the title was only delayed with the Panthers needing a teasing three points from their remaining two matches to clinch a seventh consecutive title and so become the second-most successful side in Clacton League history.

Windsor Condors defeated Windsor Eagles 6-4, Colin Stallwood taking three, Greg Green two and Martin Hogg one, and now need just seven points from their remaining two matches to secure the runners-up spot.

The Condors won two tight matches, Stallwood beating Cattermole 11-6 in the decider and Hogg scraping past Mark Smith 15-13 in the decider. For the Eagles, Cattermole won two including an 11-4 in the fifth win over Hogg, and Phil Smith one. And, with the Closed Championships in mind, Cattermole and Smith took an excellent 3-2 (10-12, 11-9, 11-5, 7-11, 12-10) doubles win against Green and Stallwood.

It was also 6-4 as third-placed Walton A beat Nomads Lions. Kevin James stayed undefeated for Walton although it was 11-5 in the fifth against Jason Lloyd. Gavin Price won two for Walton, as did Ethan Lloyd for the Lions.

Walton B conscripted Dave Binns into their side for their two matches this week, and he remained unbeaten in their 9-1 win against Walton C and 10-0 success over a below-strength Brotherhood D.

The defeat for Brotherhood D leaves them in the second relegation place, nine points adrift of Nomads Tigers who improved their position with a fighting five points in their drawn match against Brotherhood C. Kevin Gowlett stayed unbeaten for Brotherhood whilst Martin Edwards won two, beating John Marshall 11-7 in the fifth, and Pawel Szemro 12-10 in the fifth. But Edwards ran out of steam against Daryl Lott and went down 13-11 in the

fifth.

Lott won two for the Tigers, Szemro and Marshall one each, with Szemro and Lott winning the doubles 3-2 (11-9, 10-12, 3-11, 12-10, 11-9) against Edwards and Kevin Pryor.

In Division Two Brotherhood I beat Brotherhood H 6-4, a result which confirms the 'I' team as champions and the 'H' team as runners-up. But the bare facts conceal one of the closest League contests of the year. Seven of the matches went to a fifth set, the 'H' team winning the first four of them to take a 4-3 lead but the 'I' team took the final three matches of the evening, all of which went the distance.

For the 'I' team, John Owen won three, Paul Alden two and Fred Gallone one, whilst Frank Burbidge took two and Mark Salter one for the 'H' side. As is often the case, Burbidge's three singles were all five-setters, beating Gallone 11-6 in the fifth, Alden 11-9 in the fifth but losing 12-10 in the fifth to Owen. However, the closest encounter of the evening saw Salter beat Gallone 16-14 in the fifth.

There were two each for Barry Allen, Lee Allen and Shaun Beckham as Brotherhood F beat a depleted Windsor Kestrels 6-4, although none of them could get the better of Bob Sawyer who stayed unbeaten for losers. But the final result was a close-run thing, Barry Allen beating Windsor reserve Alan Charman 3-2 (11-8, 13-11, 10-12, 7-11, 13-11) in match 10 to clinch the match for the 'F' side.

Every player picked up a point but no-one stayed undefeated in the all-Windsor clash between the Buzzards and Harriers, the Buzzards eventually winning 6-4. Ray Chillingworth and Alan Rutledge won two each for the Buzzards, and shared a doubles success, with Dan Malinowski chipping in with one win. Rutledge provided what, in hindsight, was the crucial victory, defeating Isabel Barton 12-10 in the fifth.

The four points moved the Harriers seven points clear of the relegation places but things are looking bleak for bottom-team Brotherhood G who went down 10-0 to Walton E's Gary Stallwood, Mark Gale and Mark Ratcliffe.

In Division Three, Brotherhood E's Duncan Dunne, Tony Edmonds and Rodney Betts, not forgetting fourth player Cris Edwards who's currently unavailable but a valued member of their squad, celebrated their new status as champions with a 10-0 victory over lowly Nomads Ocelots.

But the battle for the runners-up place between Nomads Pumas and Windsor Penguins looks like going down to the wire.

Second-placed Pumas had to win three of the four matches which went the distance as they struggled to share the spoils with battling Brotherhood J. No-one stayed unbeaten in the match. Dave Harris and Alan Dockerill won two each for the Pumas, Harris beating Dan Still 11-7 in the fifth, Dockerill beating Harley Wood by a nail-biting 3-2 (11-8, 12-10, 10-12, 10-12, 13-11), and the pair combining in the doubles to defeat Still and Maci Harvey 11-7 in the fifth. Wood and Still took a couple each for Brotherhood, with Maci Harvey ensuring the draw with an 11-8 in the decider victory over Lionel Goddard.

Windsor Penguins made up ground in third place with an 8-2 win over Windsor Robins, Darren Bunce unbeaten, and Paul Dale and Alan Charman taking two each. Bob Bales won the two Robins' points.

The win for the Penguins, who have two matches to play, leaves them seven points behind the Pumas, who have one match left, this against Nomads Leopards. But crucially the Penguins' next League match is against Brotherhood E, coincidentally a week before they meet in the Division Three Handicap Challenge final. The Penguins' final match in the last week of the season is against Nomads Lynx.

The only other match in the Division saw Windsor Merlins beat Walton D 6-4, Walton having to concede three points through fielding a guest. Sharon Gowlett's two for the Merlins included an 11-7 in the fifth win over Toni Hayhow-Khan. Her Windsor team-mate, Bradley Henshaw, beat Lynette Sparks 11-9 in the decider but went down 12-10 in the decider to Hayhow-Khan. Sparks and Hayhow-Khan won the doubles 3-2 (14-12, 8-11, 13-11, 5-11, 11-7) against Gowlett and Henshaw.

* The Closed Championships, sponsored by Paul Newbould Planning and Building Design Services, take place at the Coastal Academy Sports Hall on Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th April. Play starts at 9am on both days. There

will be seven trophies up for grabs on Saturday and five on Sunday. The finals for all events will begin at approximately 3.30pm on both days. Refreshments will be available and all spectators are welcome. Entry is free.

* The Division Three Handicap Challenge final between Brotherhood E and Windsor Penguins takes place at the Brotherhood Hall on Tuesday 16th April at 7.30pm.

The Knock-Out Cup Final will be held on Tuesday 30th April at the Brotherhood Hall at 7.30pm between either Windsor Eagles or Windsor Condors, and Brotherhood I or Nomads Lions.

RESULTS

Division 1

Walton C 3 Nomads Panthers 7
Windsor Eagles 4 Windsor Condors 6
Nomads Lions 4 Walton A 6
Brotherhood C 5 Nomads Tigers 5
Walton B 10 Brotherhood D 0
Walton C 1 Walton B 9

Division 2

Brotherhood I 6 Brotherhood H 4
Windsor Harriers 4 Windsor Buzzards 6
Brotherhood F 6 Windsor Kestrels 4
Brotherhood G 0 Walton E 10

Division 3

Brotherhood E 10 Nomads Ocelots 0
Windsor Robins 2 Windsor Penguins 8
Nomads Pumas 5 Brotherhood J 5
Windsor Merlins 6 Walton D 4

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