



## Braintree League: Rayne lead third division charge

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Three third division teams have fought their way through to the semi-finals of the Braintree Table Tennis League handicap cup.

They will do battle for honours with the one remaining second division team next month.

For Rayne I, the lowest club in division three, that has meant a complete change of fortune.

It was only just over a month ago that they had lost all their matches. They then won their second-round handicap cup tie, followed it up with two league wins in three weeks – of which more later – and have now made further progress after their quarter final win in the handicap cup.

This was not so straightforward as the earlier round when their opponents had only two players and lost the first two sets. This time they had to battle hard to overcome their own A team.

The trailed 2-1 and 3-2, and then pulled back to 4-4 so that all depended on the final set between James Long and Steve Pennell.

The first division player started 17 points down up to 21 but made a real fight of it, just losing the first game at 21-19, and then winning the second 22-20. But it had taken it out of him. Long never allowed him to settle in the third and won 21-6 to take his team through. It was Long's third win of the evening.

Rayne I will be joined by fellow division three teams Black Notley F and Black Notley I.

The F team came from 2-1 behind to beat their own C team 5-3, with three wins from Declan Baines, while the I team came past Rayne F 6-3, with the help of an unbeaten evening for Elliot Game.

Notley D will fly the flag for the second division after beating Notley B 8-1. Adam Clift and Peter Foster were

unbeaten.

In the league, Rayne I had clocked up their first win two weeks earlier and their second quickly followed. In the first they had only faced two players, but this time it was a genuine victory, 7-3 over Rayne G. Tim Townsend was unbeaten for the G team but two wins each for James Long, Scott Whiteside and Alex Morgan plus the doubles brought the I team the win.

The top two teams in the division, Notley F and Netts E, both had 7-3 wins.

Notley F were faced with former second division player Kierlan Richards making his first appearance of the season. He was beaten by Steve Baines, who surprisingly lost to Raymond Black. Mel Cooch and Jill Canning did it the other way round.

Netts E's win came against Notley H with three wins for Tony Smith. Elliot Game, playing up from the I team, had good wins over Clive Forster and Peter Lewis and just missed out against Smith 3-2 (12-10, 9-11, 5-11, 14-12, 14-12).

There were wins also for the next two teams, 8-2 for Notley I over Notley G and 10-0 for Rayne F against Rayne H.

In division one, Netts' A and B teams faced each other. The A team had only two players but three wins for Andy Holmes and two for James Hicks gave them a draw.

Netts C and Notley A also drew, with Steve Kerns unbeaten for the visitors.

The bottom two teams both lost 8-2, Notley B to Liberal B and Rayne C to their own B team.

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