



Milton Keynes League: Good week for the girls

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Posted On: September 24, 2019

PREMIER DIVISION

With champions MK Sasaki dropping out of the League and 3 team promoted from Division 1, the Premiership is back to 8 teams (from 6) for the first time in 3 years. So no relegation for last year's bottom of the pile MK Kingpins. The last team to be relegated from the Premier were MK Powers in 2017 and they are now back alongside another 'yo yo' team (not quite good enough for the Premier but too strong for Div 1) MK Phoenix and newcomers MK Topspin.

Two of the promoted teams met in this first week as Phoenix triumphed 7-3 over my own side Topspin. Mervyn Phillips has fast-tracked himself through the lower divisions to make a confident Premier debut here for his new club, beating Russell Penn in straight games, myself in 4 and only going down 11-9 in the 5th to Topspin substitute Julie Snowdon. Bedford belle Julie was on great form herself as, after beating Mervyn, she thrashed Alan Bolding in 4, in the process often having the ace chopper pinned against the wall at one end of the court and the barriers at the other. Spectacular stuff and some fine hitting by Julie. But she came unstuck against the obdurate loan, who I managed to beat earlier when he had a problem with the operation of the expedite rule.

The other promotees MK Powers could only field a 2-player team against Greenleys Warriors but still came away with 2 points thanks to a feisty performance from that other famous Bedford belle Sarah Hudson. Shooting from the hip Sarah beat Ollie Horswell and Ricky Taiwo, after only losing 12-10 in the 5th to Valentin Cazacu in the opening set. Skipper Pete Tillotson was the other Powers' player. The 3 new MK sides are sure to be locked in a season long battle to avoid last place. though.

At the other end of the table last year's runner-up Greenleys Kings are displaying their title aspirations with the marquee signing of town champion Matt Haynes from the disbanded Sasaki outfit and parading him against last year's bottom team MK Kingpins. Matt was relatively untroubled, as was Kings' skipper Nick Howard but Guy Sparrow was undone by Craig Brown, despite holding a match point, for Kingpins solitary win. 'Closer than the score suggests' says Mark Purcell with 4 sets going the distance. Dave Allison made up the numbers for Kingpins.

Greenleys Kings may be the coming force but it was old adversaries Greenleys Monarchs and MK Spinners who faced each other in this opening week. They have been the most successful Premier teams of the decade, often finishing together in the top 2, but their time of dominance may well have past. Monarchs won this one 7-3 with a hat-trick from defender Ian Johnston, a brace from Tomek Nowakowski, a single from David Beddall plus the doubles. 4 sets went the distance with Spinners only winning one. Tim Cheek was the Spinners star man with 2 successes while Gary Jones picked up the 3rd. Neil Massa remained winless but did take Beddall to deuce in the 5th before losing.

Player of the week is Sarah Hudson.

DIVISION 1

NEWPORT PAGNELL PAIR IN SHOCK DOUBLES WIN

With the 3 top sides from last year moving on to the Premier, and no team(s) being relegated in return, the strength of this division has been considerably weakened, leaving the only MK club representatives Pumas as the overwhelming favourites for the title. However, the champions elect started their campaign on an indifferent note with just an 8-2 success against a 2-player Newport Pagnell Vantage, who finished bottom last year. No problems for the twin Pumas spearheads Julie Snowdon and Andy Smith but Chris Belton couldn't get past the tight defence of Sue Lewis and the doubles was lost too. That doubles set really caught the eye as the Smith/Belton combination are one of the most established in the League and not so long ago they were knocking out the Premier pairing of Mark Purcell/Dave Allison from the annual town tournament. Glen Davison, playing up from Division 2, partnered Sue to a memorable victory. The Pumas seemed to have everything under control, taking the first 2 games 12-10, 11-6 and moving to a 10-6 lead in the third and apparently heading for an easy win. However Sue and Glen had other ideas, forcing that game to deuce and winning it 14-12. The pattern was repeated in the fourth, with Andy/Chris again in the ascendancy at 10-8, but eventually losing it 16-14. The final game was nip and tuck, with the Sue/Glen pair taking the lead at 10-9 and converting their first match point, having saved 11 match points in total themselves!!

Woburn Sands Data's star man James Molloy looks on course to put his disappointing results last season behind him after a dominating opening performance against Greenleys Glory when the teams fought out a draw this week. James was taken to deuce in the 5th by Ian Brown and went on to straight game wins over Christine Scaysbrook and Scott Dixon as well as carrying partner Darren Ward to a crucial doubles win. A rusty looking Darren last played in the League in the 1980s and has just returned from the USA. Dave McGarragh won the remaining set for Data with a victory against Christine.

Chackmore Hasbeens were hosts to St. Christopher Van Hire on returning to the division following promotion, with all of their players taking a single win in their 3-7 defeat. Bub Burman beat Paul Haigh and both Chris Whitehead and Sam Willett triumphed over David Broome. This left Biao Wang with a maximum and winner of the doubles with David.

Finally Greenleys Eagles had a hard fought win over the other promoted side, Open University Primes. The long established trio of Geoff Callaway, Barry Bishop and Dave Plumb, in harness once again for another season, took a brace each to snatch a 6-4 win after trailing 4-3. Similar to the Chackmore match, all the OU players (James Zeng, Martin Lok and Andy Tan) won a set each, but this time all against different opponents.

Player of the week is James Molloy.

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