



## Braintree League: Martin in the spotlight

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Braintree Table Tennis League coaching officer Keith Martin has brought through a number of talents in his time but it was his own turn in the spotlight this week when he produced probably the win of his career by beating 2017 men's singles champion Brandon Crouchman.

Crouchman has finished top of the league's individual averages for each of the last three years while Martin finished last season with an average of just 35 per cent.

The last time the two met, in January, Crouchman won 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-7). This time it was Martin who won in three straight games (11-5, 11-9, 11-6). "I tactically got it right," he said afterwards in one of the season's understatements.

It was, however, Rayne C's only success against Liberal A. Neither Martin nor his team-mates could do anything about Terry Dowsett and Simon Webber.

Also in division one, the two teams likely to be battling each other to avoid relegation were involved in a match in which no one went home empty-handed.

Neil Freeman's three singles were vital in Black Notley B's 6-4 win over Netts C. He and Patrice Élonge also took the doubles while Élonge and Dave Parker won one singles each.

For Netts, Joe Meleschko won twice and Jan Fuller, in her first match of the season, and Roy Hooper one each.

Notley B had less success against Netts' B team in the first round of the team knockout cup. They took the first doubles but Nikki Davison, Alistair Hill and James Mullane won all six singles between them plus a doubles to go through 7-1.

Netts A team fared less well, mustering only two players, which is a problem against any team in the cup, but an Everest to climb against Liberal A. They too won a doubles and Maria Boulton had a good win over Scott Dowsett, but that was as far as they got.

An all-second division encounter between Felsted RBL and Rayne D went the way of the visitors, who declared at 5-1. Dave Miller won both singles he played for Rayne.

Notley C also had only two players against Liberal C, but they made their opponents fight for their passage into the next round. Tim Huxtable won both his singles while Declan Baines, without a win in the league at that point, broke his duck with a victory over Dave Hardy and came desperately close to repeating the dose against Garry Fryatt, missing out only at 3-2 (11-9, 10-12, 11-13, 11-9, 11-9).

Rayne A came past Notley A 5-2, Notley's two wins coming from Steve Kerns, including one over 2019 men's singles finalist Adam Buxton.

Nomads turned out a strong side including both Ken Lewis and Karl Baldwin to face Rayne B. The close sets all went Rayne's way including Keith Martin's win at 14-12 in the fifth game against Baldwin and John Andrews' win at 11-9 in the fifth against Lewis, which led to a 7-2 win for Rayne.

Richard Whiteside's wins in both his singles and doubles led Rayne E to a 5-3 win over Notley E in the restricted cup, in which Notley I beat Rayne H 5-3, Netts D beat their E team 5-1 (two wins for Tony Smith) and Notley F took all nine against Rayne I.

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