



Braintree League: Rayne sink champions

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Anfield was not the only place where champions and challengers came face to face. Braintree Table Tennis League's top two came up against each other – and just as at Anfield it was the champions who came unstuck

The 6-4 win for Rayne A was the first defeat on the table for Liberal A, league winners for the past four years, since April 2018.

Just as he upset the odds to win the men's singles title in May, it was Lee McHugh who was largely behind Rayne's success. He notched up three wins in impressive style, beating Simon Webber in five games, Terry Dowsett in four and Scott Dowsett in three.

It was Webber's first defeat of the season after 15 wins and Terry Dowsett's first after 12 wins.

Adam Buxton, runner-up to McHugh in April, also overcame the Dowsetts.

The result leaves the two teams level on points at the top of the table, with Rayne for the moment taking the honours as a result of winning more matches.

Netts B stay third after a 7-3 win over Liberal B in which all seven points were won by Nikki Davison and Jon Hill.

Patrick Gilbert, who spent last season in division two, has quickly got to grips with the higher sphere and remained unbeaten for Netts C in their draw against their own A team.

Steve Noble has always been a useful reserve to call on and he demonstrated his value by winning his three singles in Notley A's 6-4 win over Rayne C. Chris Parr was also unbeaten.

Rayne B had a 9-1 win over Notley B, whose point came from a Patrice Élonge win over Richard Storey.

In division two, Notley E and Liberal C have identical records in joint second place, and they kept it that way with 9-1 wins.

Notley E had to call on reserve James Gronland for their match against Netts D but his defeat by Clive Forster was the only one that got away.

Ashley Butler had a good win over Jon Fieldsend in Liberal C's win over Felsted RBL while Dave Hardy's three wins were his first of the season.

Rayne E, the only team throughout the three divisions with a 100 per cent win record, stay top after their 7-3 win over Nomads. Dave Marsh inflicted only the second defeat of the season on Karl Baldwin, albeit 13-11 in the fifth game.

Dan Anderson, the man responsible for Baldwin's first defeat, made it 15 wins out of 15 in Notley C's 7-3 win over Rayne D while Sean Clift made it nine wins in his last nine sets in Notley D's 6-4 defeat by their own F team. Gordon Fairchild made him sweat a bit though, all the way to 14-12 in the fifth.

Division three remains the most unpredictable with three points covering the top four teams.

As in division one, the top two teams faced each other and three sets from Peter Rickwood inspired Rayne G to a 6-4 win over Notley G.

Dave Allinson, whose 16 wins have done much to keep Rayne G at the top, has now re-registered with the F team and again remained unbeaten as they beat Netts E 7-3 to move level with Notley G in second place.

Notley I moved to within one point of second place after an 8-2 win over their own H team, a match that saw Chris Adkins notch up his first win of the season.

Rayne H are not far behind and they enhanced their position with a 6-4 win over their own I team.

The I team's Ian Rubens, who last week lost all three sets in five games, this week got it right and won all three, two of them in five games – 11-9 in the fifth against Tim Townsend and 12-10 in the fifth against Roger Hasler.

Liberal D's Yasunori Aoyagi remained unbeaten for the second successive match in his team's 7-3 win over Rayne J.

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