



Braintree League: Rayne fall good news for Liberal

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A stunning defeat for Rayne A – their first of the season – has thrown the ball firmly back into champions Liberal A's court in the race for the Braintree Table Tennis League title.

It was Liberal's B team who did their superiors a favour. Despite being 26 points behind after 10 matches, mid-table Liberal B more than matched their opponents.

Rayne's team featured three of their regular four-man squad, Lee McHugh, Adam Buxton and Alan Burgess, but their opponents were not put off by reputations and racked up a collection of superb victories.

Most surprising were the two defeats suffered by McHugh, undefeated up to that point this season. He lost 3-0 (11-6, 11-6, 14-12) to Adrian Pitt and 3-1 (11-13, 11-8, 11-4, 11-4) to Andrew Huckson.

Pitt, Huckson and Robin Armstrong all beat Alan Burgess and Pitt and Huckson won the doubles to give them a 6-4 victory they could hardly have expected at the start of the evening. Buxton rose above the mayhem to win his three singles for Rayne.

Liberal A served up a surprise of their own in their 8-2 win over Rayne B, a defeat for Brandon Crouchman, top of the individual averages for the past three seasons, at the hands of Ian Whiteside.

Crouchman lost the first two games, but after pulling one back, he then stormed through the fourth game 11-3 and a regulation if hard-fought win looked on the cards. But it was Whiteside who struck back to take the final game 11-8.

Whiteside and Dean Andrews also scored a notable win in the doubles over Crouchman and Simon Webber.

Upset number three arrived when Netts A failed to beat their own B team. James Mullane was the man in form here, winning his three singles for the B team. Patrick Gilbert, playing up from the C team, won two and Nikki

Davison one in the B team's 6-4 win.

Surprise No.4: It is not often that Victor Chan wins more sets for Notley A than Steve Kerns, but that was the case in their match against Netts C.

Kerns went down 11-9 in the fifth game against Jan Fuller after winning the first two ends while Chan beat Fuller in three straight games. Notley won the match 8-2.

The bottom two teams played each other and Rayne C eased their relegation worries with a 6-4 win over Black Notley B, who are now 15 points behind them. Matthew Brown was unbeaten for Rayne.

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