



Braintree League: Rayne find their form

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For the second year running Rayne's lowest-ranked team have had a late awakening in division three of the Braintree Table Tennis League.

Last season, Rayne I went 21 matches without a win before racking up three wins in a row.

This season the same set of players, now Rayne J, took nine matches to get out of the starting blocks, but again halted that sequence by winning three matches on the trot.

The third of those was against their own H team, who they have now replaced in seventh spot in the division. It was a team effort that got them over the line in the face of three wins from the H team's Tim Townsend.

James Long and Scott Whiteside won two singles each and Alex Morgan one, while Whiteside and Morgan won the doubles to ensure the 6-4 victory.

At the top of the division, Rayne F had a 9-1 win over a two-man Liberal D, while second-placed Rayne G succeeded where their F team had failed the previous week in beating Black Notley I.

Notley I were fielding a reserve, but Rayne G's 8-2 win was also notable for a win for Tim Gowers over Jonny Evans, who had won his three sets against the F team – the first time Gowers has bettered his teammates this season – and a turn-the-tables win for Peter Rickwood over Chris Adkins.

Playing up for the F team in the previous match, Rickwood had lost 15-13 in the fifth game; this time he won 12-10 in the fifth.

Notley G maintained their challenge with an 8-2 win over Rayne I, where Matt Brooks was unbeaten.

The most notable feature of Netts E's 8-2 win over Notley H was that they turned out three players who had played together before.

A different combination of players had played in each of their first 11 matches but match 12 featured the same team as match 1: Jimmy Calisin, Jack Cains and Michael Goodchild. Cains remained unbeaten.

Division two leaders Rayne E included Richard Jennings for only the second time this season and they were grateful for his presence as his three wins helped them to a tight 6-4 win over a Notley C side including the difficult-to-get-past Glen Laing. It was Jennings' win over Laing at 11-9 in the fifth that effectively sealed the win.

Second-placed Liberal C were indebted to Jon Fieldsend's three wins for their 7-3 win over Notley F while Notley E's hopes of slipping above their F team were dashed by a Ken Lewis-inspired 6-4 defeat at Nomads.

Notley D were the only one of the club's four teams in the division to post a win, 6-4 over Rayne D.

Sean Clift's three wins raised few eyebrows, but the win was secured by two excellent performances from Bruce Wickham, whose wins over Dave Punt and Paul Wellington would not have been expected.

The bottom two teams played each other and Richard Upson's unbeaten evening helped Felsted RBL to a 6-4 win over Netts D.

In division one, Liberal B were not quite able to repeat their surprise win over Rayne A when they faced Liberal A, but they did not lie down quietly. Adrian Pitt had excellent wins over Simon Webber and Terry Dowsett and Robin Armstrong a totally unexpected one over Webber. Brandon Crouchman, however, was unmoved in the 7-3 victory.

Steve Buer made his first appearance of the season for Rayne A, who, like Rayne B and Netts E, have now used 10 players this season.

His two wins alongside three each from Adam Buxton and Steve Pennell helped Rayne to an 8-2 win over Notley B, although Neil Freeman and reserve Takunda Nerutanga can be pleased with their doubles win over Buxton and Pennell.

James Hicks made his first appearance of the season in Netts C's 7-3 defeat by their own B team.

He won twice but three wins from Nikki Davison led the B team to victory.

John Andrews, Dean Andrews and Ian Whiteside all won twice as Rayne B beat Notley A 6-4. Steve Kerns was the stumbling block in each case.

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