



Clacton & District: Walton through by a whisker

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The final match between Walton D and Windsor Merlins in Group H of the Clacton & District League's Handicap Doubles Challenge would decide who would join Windsor Harriers in the round of the last 16. And the tie went down to the wire with Walton D edging home by the skin of their teeth with the narrowest of 5-4 victories.

The match was as close as the score-line suggests with the lead see-sawing throughout and no less than six of the nine matches requiring a third set to decide the winner, Walton taking four of them.

Tony Sharman with four, and Maggie Earle and Toni Hayhow-Khan with three each, shared the victories for Walton. The closest match of the night was the 3-11, 11-6, 18-16 victory for Earle and Hayhow-Khan (-3) over Dave Wright, playing as a reserve for the Merlins, and Barbara Rogers (+1). For Windsor, Sharon Gowlett won four matches and Rogers three.

There was another close match in Group E where Nomads Bobcats and Brotherhood F were battling for the honour of finishing top. The Bobcats finally triumphed 6-3 but it was not without a supreme effort, with seven of the nine matches needing a third-set decider. In a good team effort, David North, Mike Wellum and Eric Lemke all shared four wins for the Bobcats.

In the other match in the Group, Nomads Leopards and Nomads Lynx enjoyed a good scrap, albeit that neither could qualify. The Lynx took four points from matches which went the distance but it was the Leopards who took the final victory 5-4. Stuart Wilkinson won five for the Leopards, whilst there was a hat-trick of wins each for Norman Jacobs and James Horsler of the Lynx.

In Group A Windsor Robins of Division Three chalked up their third victory to qualify as unlikely Group winners. This time their victims were Windsor Magpies, the Robins taking the first five matches of the evening before eventually winning 6-3. Bob Bales shared five victories, Oleksandra Klymenko four and Mick Coker three.

Meanwhile, Nomads Pumas and Brotherhood C were playing a winner-takes-all match to qualify in second place and the Pumas made full use of their handicap advantage to win 9-0, taking the four matches which went

the distance. The Pumas' winning trio was Alan Dockerill, Dave Harris and John Bowers.

In Group B Windsor Hawks recorded their third 5-4 victory in this competition, this time over Windsor Kestrels, to finish top. But once again the Hawks left it late, performing another Houdini act to recover from 4-1 down to snatch the final four matches of the tie. John Barton, with four wins, was their most successful player. The Kestrels nevertheless qualify in second place.

In the other Group match, Windsor Buzzards and Brotherhood B were left to fight it out for the honour of finishing third. Six of the nine matches went the distance but it was the Buzzards who took the tie 7-2, largely thanks to an unbeaten performance from Alan Rutledge.

In Group C Brotherhood E edged past Walton E 5-4 but both teams still qualify for the knockout stage. Tony Edmonds of Brotherhood and Paul Woolnough of Walton were their teams' respective best players, each taking four wins. The closest match of the evening was the 4-11, 12-10, 14-12 win for Walton's Woolnough and Gary Stallwood (-6) over Kevin Pryor and Rodney Betts (+1).

Windsor Penguins and Brotherhood G were vying for top place in Group D and it was the Penguins who triumphed with a surprising and emphatic 9-0 victory, with only one match extended beyond a second set. A good performance from Alan Charman, Paul Dale and Jackie Bunce of the Penguins but, despite the result, Brotherhood G still make it through to the next Round in the second qualifying place.

The all-Nomads, all-Division Three clash between the Jaguars and Ocelots did not affect the top two positions but there was still pride at stake and it was the lowly Ocelots who gained the plaudits with a 5-4 victory over the Division's runaway leaders. Barbara Rhodes stole the show with an impressive five wins.

In one of the groups of three teams, Walton A recorded a 7-2 win against Brotherhood A to qualify as Group F winners. Gavin Price was Walton's unbeaten star on the night. Brotherhood D, who didn't have a match, qualify in second place.

Lawford have already qualified in Group G and Walton C will join them after a 6-3 success against Nomads Panthers. Paul Newbould shared five wins, Graham Buxton four and John Rankin three.

All four Walton teams who entered the competition have therefore made it through to the knockout stage. Windsor are represented by five teams, Brotherhood by four, there are just two from the Nomads Club, whilst the sole Lawford team has also qualified.

In the last 16, there four sides from the First Division, seven from the Second and five from the Third. But, with the four top-flight sides drawn against each other in Round One, the way has opened for at least one of the less-fancied teams to make unexpected progress to the final.

The full Round One draw is: Windsor Robins v Brotherhood G; Windsor Hawks v Walton E; Brotherhood E v Nomads Pumas; Windsor Penguins v Brotherhood D; Nomads Bobcats v Walton D; Walton A v Walton C; Lawford v Windsor Kestrels; Windsor Harriers v Brotherhood F.

These matches are to be played during week beginning 3rd February. Further details about the format and rules, which will differ slightly from the Group stage, plus grades and a score-sheet will be circulated to teams by 24th January.

* Just one League match in Division Two saw Lawford whitewash Windsor Kestrels 10-0. Only two individual matches were stretched to a fourth set, the remaining eight all settled in three-straight. John Colvin, Paul Phelan and Richard Spence were Lawford's hat-trick men.

* A well-respected and much-liked former player in the League, Doreen Clark, died last month, aged 90. Some of the League's more senior members will remember Doreen as a leading woman player in the 1950s and 1960s. Although she never won the Ladies Singles title – she was a losing finalist on three occasions – she was a Ladies Doubles champion with Sheila Howe four times between 1961 and 1966. The League sends its sincere condolences to Alan and his family.

RESULTS

LEAGUE

Division Two

Lawford 10 Windsor Kestrels 0

HANDICAP DOUBLES CHALLENGE

Group A

Windsor Magpies 3 Windsor Robins 6

Nomads Pumas 9 Brotherhood C 0

Group B

Windsor Buzzards 7 Brotherhood B 2

Windsor Hawks 5 Windsor Kestrels 4

Group C

Walton E 4 Brotherhood B 5

Nomads Lions 9 w/o v Windsor Eagles

Group D

Windsor Penguins 9 Brotherhood G 0

Nomads Ocelots 5 Nomads Jaguars 4

Group E

Brotherhood F 3 Nomads Bobcats 6

Nomads Leopards 5 Nomads Lynx 4

Group F

Walton A 7 Brotherhood A 2

Group G

Walton C 6 Nomads Panthers 3

Group H

Windsor Merlins 4 Walton D 5

FINAL TABLES (top two teams qualify)

Group A	P	W	L	Conc	F	A	Pts
Robins (Q)	3	3	0	0	18	9	6
Pumas (Q)	3	2	1	0	21	6	5
Brotherhood C	3	1	2	0	8	19	4
Magpies	3	0	3	0	7	20	3

Group B	P	W	L	Conc	F	A	Pts
Hawks (Q)	3	3	0	0	15	12	6
Kestrels (Q)	3	2	1	0	18	9	5
Buzzards	3	1	2	0	12	15	4
Brotherhood B	3	0	3	0	9	18	3

Group C	P	W	L	Conc	F	A	Pts
Brotherhood E (Q)	3	3	0	0	19	8	6
Walton E (Q)	3	2	1	0	18	9	5
Lions	3	1	2	0	12	15	4
Eagles	3	0	2	1	5	22	2

Group D	P	W	L	Conc	F	A	Pts
Penguins (Q)	3	3	0	0	23	4	6
Brotherhood G (Q)	3	2	1	0	16	11	5
Ocelots	3	1	2	0	8	19	4
Jaguars	3	0	3	0	7	20	3

Group E	P	W	L	Conc	F	A	Pts
Bobcats (Q)	3	3	0	0	20	7	6
Brotherhood F (Q)	3	2	1	0	14	13	5
Leopards	3	1	2	0	12	15	4
Lynx	3	0	3	0	8	19	3

Group F	P	W	L	Conc	F	A	Pts
Walton A (Q)	2	2	0	0	14	4	4
Brotherhood D (Q)	2	1	1	0	11	7	3
Brotherhood A	2	0	1	1	2	16	1

Group G	P	W	L	Conc	F	A	Pts
Lawford (Q)	2	2	0	0	15	3	4
Walton C (Q)	2	1	1	0	9	9	2
Panthers	2	0	1	1	3	15	1

Group H	P	W	L	Conc	F	A	Pts
Harriers (Q)	2	2	0	0	11	7	4
Walton D (Q)	2	1	1	0	9	9	3
Merlins	2	0	2	0	7	11	2

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