



Braintree League: Liberal build lead

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Despite conceding their first match and then losing to their closest rivals, Liberal A hold a stronger lead at the mid-season break than they did last season.

Last year, they were undefeated but only six points ahead of Rayne A. This year the gap is 10 points.

Without the concession, it would have been nearer 20 points as that match was against Netts C, a team they beat 9-1 second time around.

The difference between the two years is cumulative rather than anything drastic. The two teams have the same players, with the important exception that Liberal have added the reliable Terry Dowsett to their squad. His 24 wins out of 28 have been a major contributory factor.

So too has been the consistency of Peter Hayden. Guilty of lapses of concentration in the past, this time he has won all 17 sets he has played.

In addition, Brandon Crouchman has improved his average from 82.6 at this stage last season to 88.9 while Simon Webber is up from 77.1 per cent to 87.5.

By contrast, Rayne's top two Lee McHugh and Adam Buxton have gone down from 90.5 to 83.3 and 86.7 to 74.1 respectively.

Much can happen with half a season to go, but the odds are strongly on Liberal making it five titles in a row.

The top two Netts teams are contesting third place, as they were at this stage last year, while Black Notley B look destined for the drop they avoided by two points last season.

Division two leaders Rayne E entered 2020 as the league's only unbeaten team, 11 points clear of Liberal C – and this despite having only two regular players.

When their occasional players include Dave Marsh, Richard Jennings, Kelly Yuenyongpknan and Dave Moles that has hardly been a problem.

But the main factor has been the form of Richard Whiteside, whose average of 86.7 per cent compares with 64.3 at this stage last year.

Liberal C, third last year, second the previous two years, look set to continue in their role as bridesmaids while at the bottom promoted Netts D have predictably found life difficult.

Division three is the tightest of the three divisions with only five points separating the top three.

With Ted Sims and Alastair Brown dropping down from division two to join Dave Allinson, Rayne F have always looked the most likely to succeed although it has been Allinson rather than his two teammates who has been the backbone of the side.

Allinson has also been responsible for 16 of Rayne G's points, having started the season in their ranks.

They have maintained their form since his promotion thanks largely to the consistency of new signing Peter Rickwood, and with Brian How, third in last year's averages, now back in action, they look destined to keep up the challenge alongside Notley G, who have both Matt Brooks and Jim Davy in the division's top eight.

League positions at the mid-season break:

	Division 1					
	P	W	D	L	A	P
Liberal A	13	11	0	2	29	101
Rayne A	13	10	2	1	39	91
Netts A	13	7	2	4	50	80
Netts B	13	8	2	3	56	74
Liberal B	13	6	3	4	65	65
Black Notley A	13	4	1	8	75	55
Rayne C	13	4	1	8	81	49
Rayne B	12	4	3	5	71	49
Netts C	12	1	2	9	73	47
Black Notley B	13	1	0	12	101	29
	Division 2					
	P	W	D	L	A	P
Rayne E	13	13	0	0	37	93
Liberal C	13	9	1	3	48	82
Black Notley F	13	6	4	3	59	71
Black Notley E	13	5	1	7	59	71
Nomads	13	6	1	6	62	68
Black Notley D	13	6	0	7	67	63
Rayne D	13	5	2	6	68	62
Black Notley C	13	6	0	7	71	59
Felsted RBL	13	3	1	9	83	47
Netts D	13	1	0	12	96	34
	Division 3					
	P	W	D	L	A	P
Rayne F	13	10	1	2	42	88
Black Notley G	13	9	1	3	46	84
Rayne G	13	9	1	3	47	83
Black Notley I	13	9	2	2	55	74
Liberal D	13	5	2	6	69	61
Netts E	12	4	1	7	58	61
Rayne J	13	3	2	8	76	54
Rayne H	13	3	2	8	70	51
Black Notley H	13	2	2	9	87	43
Rayne I	12	2	2	8	80	40

Individual averages (qualification one-third of team's matches):

Division 1: 1 Peter Hayden 17 wins in 17 sets, average 100%; 2 Brandon Crouchman 16-18, 88.9; 3 Simon Webber 28-32, 87.5; 4 Terry Dowsett 24-28, 85.7; 5 Lee McHugh 15-18, 83.3; 6 Matthew Brown 12-15, 80; 7= Adam Buxton, Nikki Davison 20-27, 74.1; 9 Steve Kerns 12-17, 70.6; 10 Jon Hill 23-33, 69.7; 11 Steve Pennell 26-38, 68.4; 12 Ian Whiteside 19-30, 63.3; 13 Adrian Pitt 17-27, 62.9; 14 Colin Bennett 24-39, 61.5; 15 Patrick Gilbert 9-15, 60; 16 Ryan Pitt 14-24, 58.3; 17 James Mullane 19-33, 57.6; 18 Maria Boulton 17-30, 56.7; 19 Alan Burgess 8-15, 53.3; 20 Andrew Huckson 13-26, 50.

Division 2: 1= Dan Anderson 18-18, Ken Lewis 16-16, 100; 3 Karl Baldwin 18-20, 90; 4= Richard Whiteside 26-30, Dave Marsh 13-15, 86.7; 6 Glen Laing 18-21, 85.7; 7 Takunda Nerutanga 33-39, 84.6; 8 Sean Clift 26-33, 78.8; 9 Jon Fieldsend 23-30, 76.7; 10 Garry Fryatt 20-27, 74.1.

Division 3: 1 Dave Allinson 40-44, 90.9; 2 Ron Fosker 19-21, 90.5; 3 Jonny Evans 29-33, 82.9; 4 Peter Rickwood 24-30, 80; 5 Matt Brooks 26-33, 78.8; 6 James Gronland 11-14, 78.6 7 Ted Sims 25-32, 78.1; 8 Jim Davy 18-24, 75; 9 Jack Cains 12-17, 70.6; 10 Paul Martin 18-29, 62.1.

Note: Paul Davison has 12 out of 12 in division one and Steve Willis 11 out of 11 in division three but neither has played the minimum five matches

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