



Braintree League: Liberal can't overcome handicap

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Braintree Table Tennis League champions Liberal A have not always entered the handicap cup, figuring, one assumes, that pulling back massive deficits might prove too tough an obstacle.

They entered a team this year – and found just that.

It was their misfortune to come up against Rayne J, a rapidly improving team of 20-somethings in their second season of competitive table tennis whose handicaps may not yet have caught up with their ability.

With starts of either 15 or 17 up to 21, they showed no fear of their illustrious opponents and quickly stormed into a 4-0 lead.

They were pegged back momentarily when Peter Hayden overcame Scott Whiteside – effectively beating him 21-4, 21-3 – but that was as far as they got.

Terry Dowsett managed to take all his opponents to three games, and conceded only two points in one game, but could not quite get over the line.

James Long and Alex Morgan were undefeated for Rayne and Long, off +15, can take particular pleasure in a 21-3, 21-8 scoreline against Scott Dowsett.

Liberal were not the only first division team to perish. Netts' B and C teams also fell by the wayside and with other top division teams not entering that left Black Notley B, currently in 10th place out of 10, as the only one left.

Facings handicaps of between six and 12, Netts B found second division Rayne D too tough a nut to crack.

James Mullane had a good win over Dave Punt (off +8) but two each from Keith Flowers and Dave Miller saw Rayne through.

Netts' C team made more of a fist of it, only going down 5-4 to Notley D. Peter Foster's three sets made the difference.

Notley B showed how it's done. Facing handicaps of 12 or 14 in eight of the nine sets, they racked up a 6-3 win over Rayne H. Patrice Élonge was undefeated.

In an all division-two clash, Notley F came from 2-0 down to put out league leaders Rayne E.

Elliot Game won his three sets.

Alongside Rayne J, Netts E and Notley I will be flying the flag for the third division.

In a match where they were giving away points in some sets and receiving them in others, Netts E beat Notley G 5-2 with three sets from Daniel Farquharson and two out of two from Kierlan Richards.

Notley H were 2-0 and 3-1 up against their I team but the last five sets all went the other way, with Chris Adkins' three singles forming the I team's backbone.

In the league division three, Rayne's F and G teams strengthened their positions at the top while Notley G fell away.

Rayne G took all 10 against Notley H while Chris High's win over Tim Gowers was the only blemish in Rayne F's 9-1 win over Rayne I.

Notley G dropped back after a draw with Liberal D in which six sets went the full five games.

Matt Brooks was unbeaten for Notley G.

Notley I's 6-4 win at Rayne H included a first league win for 15-year-old Nicholas Grice.

After three successive defeats, Netts E got back on track with a 9-1 win over Rayne J. Scott Whiteside pinched the one for Rayne J but Jack Cains and Kierlan Richards held firm, including in a doubles set that featured a protracted cliffhanger.

At two games to one down, they were on the edge of defeat as the fourth game went all the way to 23-21 before they extricated themselves and went on to win the decider 11-7.

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