



## Braintree League: Injury blow for Rayne

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**Posted On:** March 03, 2020

An injury to one of their key players has thrown into doubt Rayne F's apparent charge to the Braintree Table Tennis League division three title.

Ted Sims, an integral part of the team's performances with 30 wins out of 38, is out of action with a broken toe, which has meant the team needing to turn to a succession of reserves to see out the season.

Against Black Notley H and Rayne I, it was not much of a problem as Scott Whiteside (three wins) and Tim Gowers (two) saw them through to 9-1 victories.

But Rayne H were a tougher nut to crack. Tim Townsend and Brian Dixon both got the better of skipper Alastair Brown and stand-in Charles Wilkinson to restrict the F team to a 6-4 win.

That enabled Rayne G to move to within five points after a 9-1 win over Rayne I where Chris High's win over Wilkinson was the only blemish.

Black Notley G, who briefly rose to second place three weeks ago, have found life difficult since.

After winning 11 of their first 15 matches, their 7-3 defeat by Netts E was the third match in a row without win. Not that there is any disgrace in losing to a Netts team of Jimmy Calisin (three wins), Daniel Farquharson (two) and Peter Hardy (two).

Fourth-placed Notley I had a 6-4 win over a two-man Liberal D while Rayne J dropped only one set in beating Notley H.

In division two, Rayne E stretched their lead by another two points in beating their own D team 8-2 while Liberal C had a 6-4 win over Notley C. Dave Marsh was undefeated for Rayne E and Glen Laing for Notley C.

Nomads moved back into third place with a 7-3 win over Felsted RBL, in which Kevin Saunders and Karl Baldwin took the seven sets between them.

Notley E slipped back a place after a 6-4 defeat by their own F team. Peter Pond, Elliot Game and Gordon Fairchild all won twice for the F team. Takunda Nerutanga was too good for all of them, although Fairchild took him to the wire, losing 3-2 (11-9, 6-11, 9-11, 17-15, 13-11).

Notley D's 7-3 win over Netts D was notable for an unexpected win for Peter Foster over Clive Forster.

With the individual championships less than two months away, the most significant result in division one could be the defeat of Brandon Crouchman, the 2017 men's singles champion, by James Hicks.

It was not Crouchman's first sign of vulnerability this season, having already lost to Keith Martin and Ian Whiteside – although he has beaten Lee McHugh and Paul Davison, the winners for the last two years – and it sat alongside three wins each for former champions Peter Hayden and Terry Dowsett in Liberal A's 8-2 win over Netts C.

Rayne A had a win by the same score against their own B team with McHugh and Alan Burgess undefeated. Like Liberal, they managed to lose the doubles.

Netts A, in third place, had a 10-0 win over Notley B while three wins for Adrian Pitt led Liberal B to a 6-4 win over Rayne C

Netts B had a good 7-3 win over Notley A in which Nikki Davison and James Mullane were unbeaten. That might look fairly routine until it is noted that Steve Kerns was among the opposition.

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