



Clacton & District: Walton joy, Windsor woe

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The fluctuating fortunes of sport was vividly illustrated this week in the two Handicap Knock-Out competitions organised by the Clacton & District League, with Walton E twice tasting the sweetness of success and Windsor Kestrels twice suffering the anguish of defeat.

In the first of the semi-finals of the Handicap Doubles Challenge, Walton E, a team struggling at the bottom of Division One, enjoyed a hard-fought 5-3 win over Division Two leaders Brotherhood D.

In a ding-dong tussle, Walton marched into a 3-1 lead, a lead which included a 3-2 (14-16, 12-10, 2-11, 11-7, 11-9) win for Mark Ratcliffe and Mark Gale (-1) over Grant Sharpe and Martin Scarfe (+1).

The Brotherhood threesome bounced back to level at 3-all before Walton took the tie by the scruff of the neck, Ratcliffe and Gale (-1) defeating Sharpe and Lee Allen (+1) 3-2 (9-11, 11-8, 11-8, 9-11, 11-7) in match eight to secure Walton's place in the final.

In the final, Walton E will meet another unfancied team in the form of Third Division side Nomads Pumas, who were also 5-3 winners, this against Windsor Kestrels of Division Two.

In what proved to be a marathon four-hour encounter, with six matches settled in four and two requiring a fifth set, the Kestrels took both the five-setters. Graham Bunce and Debra Found (-8) beat Lionel Goddard and John Bowers (+1) 12-10 in the fifth whilst Found and Kayley Rodriguez (-5) edged out Bowers and Dave Harris (+1) 10-12, 10-12, 12-10, 11-8, 11-9. But a combination of experience, handicap advantage and fighting spirit earned the Pumas an unexpected, but well-deserved, place in the final.

So the Kestrels were left to seek consolation in the Knock-Out Cup but their week of woe continued as their hopes of glory in the Handicap Knock-Out Cup were dashed when they lost in the quarter-final of that competition, going down to fellow-Division Two side Brotherhood G.

The Kestrels, fielding their top three players, took the first match of the evening, Graham Bunce and Colin Beaumont (-6) beating Paul Metcalf and John Gallagher (+1) 11-9 in the fifth. At the half-way stage, the score

stood at 2-all but Brotherhood upped the pace to take the next three matches to notch up an unlikely 5-2 victory. Mark Beckham stayed unbeaten on the night.

But there was further joy for Walton E whose excellent week continued when they progressed into the Cup semi-finals with an emphatic victory over club-mates Walton A in a tie between the only two remaining top-flight sides left in the competition. The 'E' team made full use of their grade advantage to win 5-0, the only match which went the distance the 3-2 (10-12, 11-7, 8-11, 11-8, 11-3) victory for Mark Gale (+2) over Gary Young (-8).

Division Two leaders Brotherhood D made up for their disappointment in the Handicap Doubles Challenge by eliminating Brotherhood F, the last remaining Third Division side in the Knock-Out Cup, winning 5-3.

However, it was no walk in the park for the victors, with the 'F' team racing into an early 3-1 lead, Harley Wood (+1) taking an important 11-8 in the decider win over the 'D' team captain Barry Allen (-8). But the Division Two side steadied the ship to take four matches on the bounce, Lee Allen again proving their go-to man, remaining undefeated in his two singles and one doubles.

Windsor Harriers made it a third team from Division Two in the semi-finals, with a 5-1 victory over Nomads Bobcats, also of Division Two. The tie was closer than the score-line suggests, with two of the individual matches going to five, and the remaining four needing a fourth set.

Windsor reserve Sharon Gowlett (+1) had an important 11-7 in the decider win against Mike Wellum (-5) whilst Ferdy Rodriguez wrapped up matters with an 11-6 in the decider win against the same player in a match played off scratch.

In the semi-finals, Walton E will host Windsor Harriers whilst Brotherhood G and Brotherhood D will ensure a Division Two side is in the final for a second year running.

* In the only League match of the week, Division Three leaders Nomads Jaguars beat Brotherhood F 7-3, despite a treble from Brotherhood's Lee Harvey. There were two each for Mike Vilka, Kevin Hume and Harry Hawkes, the closest match seeing Hume defeat Dan Still 3-2 (13-11, 9-11, 9-11, 12-10, 11-7).

* Following advice issued by the Government this week, the League has decided to suspend all local table tennis activities until further notice.

This includes the final of the Handicap Doubles Challenge and the semi-finals of the Knock-Out Cup, as well as the remaining League matches, the Quiz Night planned for 4th April, and the Closed Championships scheduled for 18th and 19th April.

RESULTS

HANDICAP KNOCK-OUT CUP

Round 3

Nomads Bobcats 1 Windsor Harriers 5

Brotherhood D 5 Brotherhood F 3

Windsor Kestrels 2 Brotherhood G 5

Walton A 0 Walton E 5

HANDICAP DOUBLES CHALLENGE

Semi-final

Nomads Pumas 5 Windsor Kestrels 3

Walton E 5 Brotherhood D 3

LEAGUE

Division Three

Brotherhood F 3 Nomads Jaguars 7

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