



Braintree League: Close matches before suspension

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Braintree Table Tennis League has been suspended, six weeks after starting its experimental mini season – after some close matches in the final round of fixtures.

The new Tier 2 rules for Essex have meant that the indoor gatherings required of a table tennis match have become illegal.

League chairman Ron Fosker said: “We always knew it was possible – indeed most of us thought it was likely – that the mini season wouldn’t run its course.

“But we wanted to give players a chance to have some sort of game and six weeks is better than nothing.

“We were surprised by the number of players who took the opportunity to have a game. Around 85 to 90 per cent of the league’s players played at least once, so I think we can say we achieved our purpose.

“The league will now be put on hold in the hope that it can resume when restrictions are lifted.”

Before the suspension, Division Three of the league was shaping up to be one of the tightest.

Apart from Felsted RBL, who have played only one match, all teams have lost at least once in the opening four weeks with two Black Notley teams, C and D, locked closely together at the top.

The D team are one point ahead but have played one more match. An excellent performance by Jonny Evans – wins over Dave Allinson, Alastair Brown and Ted Sims are never easy – edged them to a 5-4 win over Rayne E.

But the C team moved up threateningly with an 8-1 win over their own E team following an earlier 7-2 win over Netts D. Elliot Game was undefeated in both matches.

Earlier, the D team had tumbled to a 7-2 defeat to Felsted, suggesting the latter will be a threat when they catch up on their fixtures, which were postponed because their hall was unavailable. Richard Baxter was unbeaten in the win over Notley D.

In division four, Rayne F dismissed their nearest challengers Notley F 6-3 although no one could get past Declan Baines, whose three wins included revenge over Peter Taylor, who had beaten him 12 days earlier while playing for the H team.

Back with the H team, Taylor was unbeaten, as was Dave Whiting, in the 8-1 win over Netts E.

Division two is another division that promises a tight race. Every team has lost twice apart from Rayne C, who have only played three.

It was Rayne C who put a second dent in leaders Liberal C's record. They won 5-4 in a match where four players won twice.

Gareth Davies had an excellent 3-2 win over Ian Whiteside, playing below his normal standard, (11-7, 14-12, 13-15, 9-11, 11-8). But Davies lost to Keith Martin, who lost to Dave Razzell, who lost to Whiteside.

Notley A, who are second, had an 8-1 win over Rayne D with Zach Harrington and Patrice Elonge unbeaten. Chris Parr failed by a whisker to join them, falling only at 11-9 in the fifth game to Steve Buer.

Netts C had only two players for their match against Notley B, but it was enough. Joe Meleschko won three and Fred Evans two.

In division one six-times men's singles champion suffered a surprise defeat at the hands of Andy Holmes in Netts A's 5-4 win over their own B team.

The win, at 11-9 in the fifth, was particularly notable as Holmes also became new signing Rui Campos's first, and so far only, conquest in the league.

In a later match, Nikki Davison's three wins led Netts B to a 6-3 win over Liberal B.

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