



Braintree League: Champions beaten in opener

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The Braintree Table Tennis League's fixture chart pitched last season's top two into battle in its first week – and it was the champions who came off second best.

Liberal A may have been a bit rusty but take nothing away from Steve Pennell, who came up with another stirring performance.

It was Pennell who brought off the only win over six-times men's singles champion Peter Hayden in the last full season, and he did it again, in three straight games, a punishment he also meted out to Terry Dowsett, another six-times winner, as well as Zach Harrington, leading Rayne A to a 5-4 win.

There was a better start for Liberal's B team, 8-1 winners over Black Notley B, a match that featured the first appearance for many years of the 2004 and 2005 boys' singles champion Ashley Skeggs. He was undefeated, as was Adam Cuthbert.

There were 8-1 wins too for both the Netts teams, the A team over Notley A and the B team against Rayne B.

Liberal C's quest for the division two title did not get off to a good start when they tumbled to a 5-4 defeat by Notley C. Dan Anderson was undefeated, as he was throughout the last full season, but it was captain Tim Huxtable's two wins that got them over the line.

Likely challengers Rayne C were given a stiff workout by their own D team, all of whom were in the third division last time out. There was a win each for Dave Allinson and Peter Rickwood and a particularly impressive one from Lewis Armstrong-Kirton, who only took the game up seriously in the last full season, where he won fewer than 33 per cent in division three.

Paul Nicol's three sets led Notley D to a 5-4 win over their own F team while Ken Lewis and Karl Baldwin were unbeaten in Sudbury Nomads' 6-3 win over Notley E.

The fixture chart also threw two challengers together in division three where Netts C overcame Rayne E 6-3. A

knee injury meant that Ted Sims had to concede two sets but not before he had inflicted a rare defeat on Clive Forster.

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