



Braintree League: Brown clinches a cup thriller

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It was the tightest of tight endings to a tight match as the Braintree Table Tennis League preliminary round cup match between Black Notley I and Rayne F swayed one way and the other before reaching its nailbiting finish.

Rayne led 3-0, only to be pegged back to 3-3. Then 4-3 became 4-4, leaving the stage to two of the game's longest-standing players, Alastair Brown and John Wickins, to bring the match to a conclusion.

In keeping with the match, their set dipped one way and then the other. Brown, giving away a +5 handicap, sneaked home at 22-20 in the first game after clawing back some game points, and then repeated the dose in the second game, pulling back to win 24-22 to take his side through to the next round.

It was a match in which no one won all three or lost all three. Brown and Chris High won two and Lewis Armstrong one for Rayne while Matt Stephenson won two and Wickins and Paul Downes one each for Notley.

Rayne F will join their C team in round one after they dispatched Notley A 5-1. Paul Wellington and Richard Whiteside both won two out of two.

Rayne were less successful in another tie against Notley. Their E team, effectively the holders as two of their players were in the I team that won the cup the last time it was played in 2019, found Notley's D team too strong for them. Alan Billing was undefeated as Notley D ran out 7-2 winners.

Two Notley teams, H and F, fought out a close match before the F team established superiority. Peter Foster was unbeaten in their 5-4 win.

Sudbury Nomads are also through. Richard Kemp won the two singles he played in their 5-2 win over Rayne G.

In a league match rearranged from the week before Christmas, Rayne A had a solid win over Netts B to increase their chances of taking the runners-up spot in division one.

As a result of their 7-2 win, they are now only a point behind with two matches in hand. Lee McHugh, in only his

second match of the season, and Steve Pennell were unbeaten.

Liberal A moved to within three points of Netts B with an 8-1 win over Notley B. Reserve Gordon Fairchild won Notley's only set.

In division two Notley F ended a curious run of six consecutive 5-4s – three for, three against – by reaching six against Notley E. Sean Clift was unbeaten.

Notley I at last moved off the bottom spot in division three they had occupied virtually all season by taking three points off their H team. Paul Downes won twice for the I team but the H's Graham Chinnery was in no mood to give anything away, conceding only 33 points in his nine games.

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