

Tonbridge & Tunbridge Wells TTL Report

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Above are the unfortunately relegated Darent Valley Team

Dramatic End to the First Half of the Season

Despite a valiant effort in the last few weeks, Darent Valley were pipped by just one point for the seventh and final place in Division One for the second half of the season.

It was a close finish which was ultimately won by Teen & 20 A. In the end it all came down to the final two weeks when T & 20 managed to win fourteen out of twenty points to Darent Valley's thirteen. It really was that close!

Astute signings of new players by T & 20 B and Otford B enabled both teams to avoid the dogfight. Upon reflection, Darent Valley just had too many layers missing at crucial times, whereas T & 20 could always rely on their 'old' stalwarts.

At the other end of the table, Leigh A finished on top from Leigh B, with last season's champions, Otford A, trailing in third place. Perhaps, with Steve Johnson returning from his travels, Otford will be able to put up a much stronger defence of their title in the second half.

Evidence, if it was ever needed, that Leigh A want their title back, was clearly demonstrated by their team selection for their away game to Otford A. Mick Cripps, Mark Brown and Mark Romano started for Leigh whilst the returning Steve Johnson, joined Tyron Stalberg and Nick Larmer, for Otford. Both teams, therefore, were at full strength. The two Marks were unstoppable on the night, conceding only one game between the two of them. In fact, Otford won just nine games all night! Steve and Nick both beat Mick in three straight and Tyron took him to five but lost 11-7 in the final game. As a consequence, Leigh ran out 8-2 winners.

The task facing T & 20 A in their penultimate match against their B team was simple to understand; score more points than Darent Valley can against Otford B and Division One status was pretty much assured. In days gone by this may have been a fairly routine exercise, but not now, not since T & 20 B recruited Nick Wetton and Rob Withers.

The overall match was very close with many deuce games throughout the evening while the lead switched from one team to the other. After eight games the score was four apiece and it was down to Ming Majoe and Nick Wetton to play the final singles contest. In a tight match Nick squeezed through in four games. Nick then paired up with Rob to defeat Ming and Nick Smith in three straight games in the doubles. So the final score was 6-4 to the B team. With Darent Valley only winning three points, it looked as though T & 20 A had done enough. For the A team, Ming's five game win over Rob Withers and Geoff Curtis's three game victory over Peter Duke, were crucial.

As proof there will be few easy fixtures when the new Division One is formed, Otford A had a real battle to beat Byng Hall. The latter team fielded the trio of Jurate Brazaityte, Jasmin Ould and Mark Baker against a full strength Otford team of Tyron Stalberg, Nick Larmer and Steve Johnson. After Steve lost the first match, in the fifth, to Jurate, Otford won the next four and seemed to be coasting. However, Jasmin then beat Nick to trim the village team's lead to two. Tyron then beat Mark to make it 5-2. Although, when Steve beat Jasmin three straight, victory was assured, Byng Hall hadn't given up. Jurate won her second singles of the night by beating Nick to make it 6-3 and then combined with Jasmin to take the doubles. A hard earned six points for Otford that just about keeps them in the race for the eventual title.

By Steve Day

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