

Room at the top for Rogers' return to Leicester

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The return of Chris Rogers has spiced up the race to top the gradings as the Leicester League prepares to get the new season under way.

Rogers is back at Knighton Park and is set to join last year's top two, Maurice Newman and Dave Gannon, in a battle for supremacy in Division One.

Rogers, now a few years a veteran, started life in the local league as an eight-year-old, eventually topping the individual averages on a number of occasions before moving to the Nottingham area because of work commitments.

He maintained ties with Knighton Park through his sister, Karen Smith, while his son Jack made his league debut last term.

If we put the extremely talented Alice Sheng, who came for one season a couple of years ago and did not even drop a game, to one side, it has been largely a two-horse race between Thringstone's Newman and Gannon of Abbots Road.

Newman had won the National Over-60 title three years on the trot but Gannon just edged home last season in Leicester.

Rogers, Newman and Gannon should have titanic battles for top spot and, hopefully, they will embark on a full series of matches between the three of them, while one or two other players will be chipping away.

The Unicorn pair of Trevor Kerry and Tim Sheppard did very well last year when their team ran away with the league title, while Matt Hobday of Electricity is also well capable of grabbing a success or two.

The senior league, having finished last season with 61 teams, has 60 this term, which falls very nicely into the format of five divisions of 12 teams. Peter Wilson, the league's chairman, has juggled them all very nicely to ensure that, first of all, everyone who should have been promoted has been, but then to fill gaps so that the five divisions look extremely competitive.

Still the third largest table tennis league in England, the Leicester League has done very well to sustain numbers with a great deal going on behind the scenes by way of development which, while focussing so far mainly on the younger element, is also concentrating more and more on the mid-age range of those in their 20s, 30s and 40s. There is already an adult feeder group set up with more planned in the pipeline.

The Leicester Development League, in effect the Junior League, continues to go from strength to strength and it looks very much as though there will be around 38 teams taking part which would be up six from last season.

Vaughan Allington, the major organiser, has performed miracles over the past few years from the league's humble beginnings to become a major force that stands up extremely well as a target for other areas in the country as a whole to aim at.

Current top 10 gradings:

311 Dave Gannon (Abbots Road). Div One average 95.6

301 Maurice Newman (Thringstone). 93.4

295 Trevor Kerry (Unicorn). 88.9

294 Tim Sheppard (Unicorn). 88.3

289 Abraham Conteh (Arnesby) 84.4

286 Matt Hobday (Electricity). 84.9

280 Jon Williams (Ajax Wolvey) 79.0
270 Aiden Walsh (Ajax Wolvey) 75.9
269 Karen Smith (Knighton Park) 72.3
267 Andy LeButt (Electricity) 76.3
Chris Rogers (Knighton Park) ungraded

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