

Panthers trio aiming to hunt down a title hat-trick

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Nomads Panthers are on the prowl to make it a hat-trick of Division One titles in the Clacton and District League.

With the 2014/15 season beginning on September 15th, the Panthers keep faith with the family trio of James Denyer, Gill Locke and Colin Webber – supported by an array of top-calibre reserves – that served them well last year. They rightly start the season as favourites.

The Walton A line-up of Peter Burrows, Colin Dearman, Kevin Gowlett, John Rice and the newly-acquired David Binns looks strong on paper and they should be the likeliest challengers.

Brotherhood A give an opportunity to talented junior Elliott Attrill and, with Greg Green, John Andrews and Alan Burgess again in their squad, a top-three finish would be the minimum of their ambitions.

Walton C have added Gary Young to last year's regular quartet, whilst Windsor Condors, led by Colin Stallwood, have Paul Woolnough replacing Jim Pallett.

Both teams should finish comfortably in the top-half of the table whilst Windsor Hawks, one of only two unchanged sides in the division, will be expecting to improve on last season's seventh place.

Only once in the last 25 years has a Windsor Eagles' side finished outside the top six but, with Fred Button an absentee through illness, they will need to battle hard to maintain that proud tradition.

Nomads Lions' regulars John Hatley and John Fenton have been supplemented by a quartet of talented young players – Sam Hume, Paul Hume, Adam Wilkin and Adam Cuthbert – and they could be the division's dark horses.

Walton B are also unchanged and, although they struggled just above the relegation zone last year, they have enough experience to keep clear of trouble.

Of the remaining three teams, promoted Windsor Kestrels have the best chance of survival, having supplemented their familiar trio of Graham Bunce, Dave Martin and Bob Sawyer with former Nomads' player Colin Beaumont.

Brotherhood B were reprieved from relegation in 2013/14 and, whilst survival will again be to the forefront of their minds, much interest will focus on the progress of junior Gracie Edwards who joins Martin Edwards, David North and John Owen.

With Gary Stallwood's Carswell-like defection, the newly-promoted Windsor Ravens' squad of John Harvey, John Long and Brian Thiel looks decidedly fragile and, although they will fight hard, they start as odds-on favourites for the wooden spoon.

* A preview of Divisions Two and Three will appear next week – Nomads Cougars have withdrawn from Division Three through lack of players.

* Players are reminded they must register with Table Tennis England in order to be eligible to play League table tennis. Any queries, contact League Secretary Lyn White on 01255 425292.

* Members of the League will be saddened to learn of the death of John Hicks.

John, and his brother Brian, were stalwarts of the League in the immediate post-war period. In his heyday, John

was a formidable player and was a winner of the Division One title with Walton YM on more than one occasion in the 1950s. Although never a Men's Singles champion, John won the Men's Doubles title in 1952 and 1960. Latterly he served the League as its auditor, a job he did willingly and efficiently.

The League sends its sincere condolences to John's family.

Tony Ostwick

Press Secretary

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