

BBATT and Burton Uxbridge face tough defence

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The biggest British League event of the year takes to the table this weekend as the Junior British League begins.

A mammoth 74 teams will enter the RAF Cosford spotlight, which has camped in the midlands for the week after the Veterans' British League took place in the same venue last weekend.

It is yet another healthy turnout for the thriving junior scene as British table tennis continues its rapid improvement.



Last year's champions from BBATT

BBATT enter the Boys' Premier Division as reigning champions after a dominant title-winning year last season. Yet the quartet of Danny Lawrence, Josh and Jack Bennett and Alex Ramsden will have to replicate and enhance last year's triumphs to secure another title.

Ormesby will be one of a number of championship rivals, with Premier British League duo Tom Jarvis and Chris Wheeler joined by the ever improving Josh Harland.

The Premier Division has a different format to the other 11 divisions. Whilst the others are all leagues of six, the Premier is a league of eight that will be split into two leagues of four at the midway stage.

The fight to make the top four will be an inevitably ferocious affair, with little to pick between most teams.

One of those teams is Wood Green, who have a different feel to their side after losing several players due to age restrictions. However, the acquisitions of Alec Ward and Joe Pilkington help fill the void.

London LVA make their entrance to the Junior promised land boasting a wealth of talent. Gabriel Achampong and Luke Savill lead the line for the capital-based side, and alongside Omar Khassal and William Apelqvist they could prove to be a major force.

Jamie Trevillion features once again for Bournemouth Sports following their promotion, and is joined by the likes of Hugo Pang and Jimmy Yeung as they go in pursuit of glory, whilst a solid quartet representing Draycott, including Nathan Butler, will make them a tough team to conquer.

There's also room for two sides outside of England. A dangerous Welsh trio of Ryan Oyler, Callum Evans and Jac Jenkins form yet another capable side, whilst the Irish Boys will be hopeful of securing a few big results in what is an extremely competitive division.

Meanwhile, a new era for the Girls' Premier Division begins with a number of shining talents ready to set the scene alight.



Last year's winning Burton Uxbridge girls' line-up

In what promises to be one of the tightest divisions in the hall, all six teams feature fine talents in a competition that will help showcase their potential.

Ellenborough, a club with a great British League pedigree, return to the Girls' top division with an ominous looking side.

Under-18s world No 82 Leile Imre is arguably the star attraction in any division for the upcoming weekend. Imre, ranked 18 places below Tin-Tin Ho in the junior world rankings, is joined by Emily Bolton, Denise Payet and Zahna

Hall in representing Ellenborough, who will be confident of fighting for honours throughout the season.

Yet defending champions Burton Uxbridge will undoubtedly have a say in where the title goes this season. They are spearheaded by Lois Peake, who has performed admirably in various British League competitions, and alongside new recruits Eva Wang and Letita McMullan, Burton will remain strong.

Katie McGlone leads an Irish contingent that has what it takes to be competitive after last year's third-place finished, whilst Draycott maintain their place in the division despite last year's relegation, however they come back stronger for last year's experience.

Ulster and Batts are the two other sides that make up the division. The pair, who have both been promoted this season, feature enough talent to make strides up the competition. Hannah Lynch-Dawson is joined by Lucy Elliot and Laura Finn in representing Ulster, whilst Batts' side consists of Ella Patel, Jane Li and Stephanie Cross.

A wealth of talent outside the top divisions makes for formidable reading across the other leagues.

Northfield Boys enter Boys' Division 1 as slight favourites, however they will undoubtedly be pushed the whole way by the likes of Greenhouse and Ellenborough, whilst Wales Girls should be prominent near the peak of Girls' Division 1 after registering a strong team featuring Beth Roberts.

A number of teams shall be confident of success in Boys' Division 2A, with little separating the sides, in particular Rotherham Scorpions and St Mary's TTC, whilst Fusion enter Division 2B as the team to beat with a strong team that has strength in depth.

Another tight league is Girls' Division 2, with several teams in contention for glory. Warrington and Fusion may edge the other teams, but the division is one to expect the unexpected from.

Will Hornsey leads the line for Bankfield in Division 3A, however his side will come up against a number of reputable opponents, such as Greenhouse II, who have sealed the services of Kieber Silva in their pursuit of promotion.

Division 3B appears to be a particularly tight league, with little separating all six teams in the event, whilst Urban TTC enters Girls' Division 3 as favourites with Kata Fule spearheading the attack.

One thing evident this season is the strength across the leagues, a point emphasised by the talents featuring in the lower divisions.

Kaine McDonald and Tommy Heydon feature in Division 4A for Ormesby II and Cardiff City respectively, whilst upcoming prospect Calum Morrison, who picked up several impressive victories at the South Shields GP, is the star in Division 4B for Horsham Spinners.

The dedicated press and publicity team will be on hand to keep an eye on all the action all the weekend, with scores, news and reaction available at tabletennis365.com/britishleague or on Twitter @BritishLeague.

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