

Leicester League: Kiani shows fight to claim trophy

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One of the most popular tournaments in local table tennis circles is the Phil Reid Memorial Trophy, an individual handicap singles in memory of the longest serving stalwart of the Leicestershire County Association whose whole life was dedicated to the sport. No mean player at his best in the top half of Division One, his tireless work in so many aspects will be long remembered.

It usually gets a very good entry, coming as it does in the middle of the season during a break in league play, and the players were drawn into groups of five or six with the idea that everyone has at least four sets, best of three, up to the old fashioned 21 points because of the handicapping. Players from near the top of Division One right to near the bottom of Division Five were represented as well as a host in between.

Andy Wright has organised the event extremely well for many years and he takes note of exceptional improvement during the first half of the season to make sure the handicaps are as accurate as they can be. Ultimate close matches throughout were the result, and in particular those in the latter stages.

On finals day eight qualifying players were drawn into two round-robin groups with the top two going through to the semi-finals.

Group One needed a countback as both John Genovese and Abraham Lam finished at 2-1. Group Two was a little more clear-cut with Reza Kiani, who has been playing so well in the top flight of the league and giving points away throughout the whole competition, winning all three, followed by Tomas Oravec who has been the scourge of Division Two.

Lam has been finding good form of late and, receiving 13, beat Kiani 21-18 in the first and was 20-16 up in the second game before the latter won 23-21 and took the third 21-18. In the other semi, Genovese had slightly the easier passage but still needed three games receiving five from Oravec.

The final was classic handicap with Genovese receiving nine points per game and Kiani just getting home in the first 21-19. Genovese won the second 21-17 and looked to have his opponent at his mercy at 15-10 up in the decided. But Kiani is a fighter, taking the remaining points 11-4 to win 21-19. A fitting end to an excellent event.

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The second half of the Leicester League has got under way with a few results already filtering through, including two significant ones at each end of the spectrum.

In **Division One** the eagerly anticipated clash between the top two went the way of Unicorn who now look absolute odd-on favourites to take the title after beating Knighton Park 6-4. Their opponents are only one win adrift but the students have not looked like dropping a match against everyone else.

KP's Karen Smith took the first against unbeaten Jared Patel 11-4 but the latter got back on track to take the next three games, before Chris Rogers defeated Trevor Kerry to level the score. Mark Scutts put Unicorn into the lead by defeating Tobit Dehnen and then came what everyone knew would be the vital clash with Patel and Rogers going head to head — Patel winning 3-1 (11-9, 10-12, 13-11, 11-6).

Both Smith and Dehnen managed wins over Kerry later but the Park were always playing catch up with Patel securing his usual maximum. Still just 5-4 after the singles, Unicorn smoothly won the doubles in three to secure full points.

In **Division Five**, Knighton Park XI lost their first one of the season when going down 6-4 to Regent Sports who were stronger in depth in overcoming the usual maximum from Nikki Farrall. Gary Featherstone and Richard Just both won two for Regent while Roger Newby chipped in with one and KP lost the doubles for the first time this term.

This puts Winstanley Wizards within striking distance after their nailbiting 6-4 victory over Eagles, with young Jack Kermode doing most of the damage with three excellent victories, although Chris Webster did well to win two and Ken Wadeson one.

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