

Leicestershire Table Tennis Association: 15-year-old Aman Rashid steals the show

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Star of the Leicester and District League's Closed Championships held at the Knighton Park club's headquarters was 15-year-old Aman Rashid who won four titles over the two days and reached the final of two more, relishing playing at his own club, albeit in different conditions to league matches.

Rashid faced Rayan Kotecha in the Junior Boys' final which he won 3-1 (11-4, 11-6, 7-11, 11-2) and then had a similar looking score line in the Intermediate final against Jessica Birbeck who was perhaps a little unfortunate not to take her opponent to five games, Rashid finally getting home 3-1 (12-10, 8-11, 12-10, 11-2).

Birbeck had success of her own when she won the Ladies singles title, beating Shirley Pickering in the final 3-0 after a promising first game for the latter (14-12, 11-3, 11-0).

It was somewhat unfortunate for the holder of the Men's title, Reza Kiani, who was so looking forward to defending his title against the combined might of Unicorn who were out in force. Kiani is a doctor and he was called to duty at the eleventh hour and had to pull out leaving two of the students' players to battle out the main title when Jared Patel, unbeaten in the league this term, defeated team-mate, Mark Scutts, in a searing match 3-2 (11-2, 11-5, 6-11, 8-11, 11-7).

But the Unicorn players did not have things all their own way. Patel had combined with Geoff Parsons to reach the final of the Men's Doubles but they found themselves up against an unstoppable force that was Electricity's David Grundy and Andy LeButt who were in magnificent form as they powered to a 3-0 success (11-7, 11-2, 11-7).

The age groups all had different winners with Dave Gannon beating Richard Hayes in the Veterans, Hayes going one better in the Over 50s against Les Baker and then Steve White turned the clock back to win the Over 60s against Shirley Pickering, all three finals won in three games.

Rashid's other individual success came in the Handicap Singles when he overcame a 6 points start up to 21 to beat the quirky style of John Genovese 21-14, 21-16. Rashid also took the Handicap Doubles with Ray Lambert when they beat Fahed Sacoor and John Bowness.

Winners of the Graded events:

Under 100: Mike Pratt beat Simon Taylor 3-1.

Under 150: John Bowness beat Martin Pember 3-2.

Under 200: John Genovese beat Peter Wilson 3-1.

Under 250: Les Baker beat Aman Rashid 3-0.

Under 300: Andy LeButt beat Aman Rashid 3-1.

Under 400: Andy LeButt beat Geoff Parsons 3-0.

As the Leicester League moves into its last two or three weeks three of the five divisional champions have been decided while the other two are all but there. Starting from the bottom we find Knighton Park XI beating Eagles 8-2 to secure the Division Five title with Nikki Farrall and Aga Hirt again in top form.

Leicestershire Police have had Division Four sewn up for some time with their latest success a tight one against Abbots Road IV and needing a team effort. Lucky Obi and Chetan Tailor both won two and Min Gupta one, the doubles finally securing full points.

Unicorn II made absolutely sure of Division Three when they beat fourth placed team, Knighton Park VI, 9-1.

The top two divisions are not mathematically certain yet with Unicorn's first team still needing to win two of their last three matches to be fully certain of Division One after losing 6-4 to Ajax Wolvey for whom Mick Allsopp, John Fuller and Aidan Walsh all won two.

In Division Two Desford were flying home and dry a few weeks ago but have lost two and drawn one of their last three matches and now also need to win two out of three to make sure of the title.

John Bowness (Publicity Officer)

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