

Northumbria League: Club Crams in the trophies

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Posted On: May 11, 2015



Cramlington Table Tennis Club swept the board in the Northumbria League with their teams finishing in the top two places in the Premier Division and one of their teams also winning the Handicap Cup.

Premier Division

Cramlington Casuals team of Andrew Wilkinson, Barry Richardson and Steve Penman won the Premier League for the third successive year, finishing 13 points clear at the top of the table. Runners-up were Cramlington Reivers whose squad of Dale Aitkenhead, Gary Sangster, Ellis Cooper, Mark Christie and Geoff Salter just edged out the NESLC players Jim Stamas, Richard Wilson, Rob Reed and Eddie Smith by one point.

At the other end of the table, Riding Mill and Cramlington Tigers lost their Premier Division status.

Division One

Anthony Ainley, Graeme Bell and John Russell, representing Newton A, were untroubled all season and ran out convincing winners with a massive 45-point advantage over second-placed Seaburn Dene to return to the top flight at the first time of asking. The battle to be promoted along with Newton continued until the last week of the season before Seaburn Dene's Chris Dixon, Rod Roberts and Ken Bowman also made a quick return to the Premier Division. They eventually finished four points ahead of Mortimer.

North Fire A and Cramlington Cobras were relegated.

Division Two

The winners of this division were Springwell B, who had a large squad of Michael Hope, Caron Guthrie, Alan Livingstone, Charlie Mouzon and young Robert Renton and they all played a part in their team's success.

It was a close-run thing for second place with Ouston Community Centre A, YMCA North Tyneside B and Birtley all in the running until the final two weeks. Neil Rodgers, Mark Rodgers and Mike Lyons of Ouston were eventually the successful side.

Old England FATTs and Saints were the two sides to lose their places in the division.

Division Three

The Tynedale club, Matfen's B and C sides were always the teams to be in the hunt for promotion to the second division but with the North East Chinese Association C team including Chun Yin Yu in their side they were eventually separated. Yu, who was a losing semi-finalist in the Northumberland Closed Tournament, was far too good for this division and did not drop a single match all season. Matfen B side of Alex Holliday, Dave Swan, John Henderson and Philip Spencer finished top with the Chinese side of Yu, Kit Robinson and Terry Kwong taking second spot, leaving Matfen C as well as Ouston B just out of the promotion spots.

NESLC Codgers and Cramlington Dragons found life in this division too hard and will be in the bottom division next time round.

Division Four

Newcomers Brandon and Byshottles Table Tennis Club made their mark in their first season in the League and two of their young players, Simon Knopf and Max Duffin, went through the season unbeaten as they cruised to

promotion, winning the division by six points from the YMCA North Tyneside C team of veterans, Ramon Pini, Ron Bain and Gerry Meller.

Handicap Cup

The final of the Handicap Cup was a really exciting affair as Premier Division Byker took on Cramlington Corinthians from Division Three. The Corinthinans got off to a winning start when one of their junior players, Alex Creighton, defeated Christine Burke and with each side taking alternate matches it went to 4-4 as another junior, Blair Carmichael, made the most of his starts under the handicap system to complete a hat-trick of wins over Dave Robson, Keith Patterson and Burke. Finally, the Corinthians experienced player, Mike Dunn got the better of Burke to give them victory.

Summer League

It is back to league action after a very short break as the Summer League gets under way with 38 teams. This is an increase of six compared with last year and there are now five divisions.

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