

Northumbria League: Stingers make early running

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The Summer season of the league is now well under way with 38 teams taking part in five divisions, an increase of six teams and one division compared with last year.

Division One

Early leaders are Cramlington Stingers, who have won all four of their opening matches. Dale Aitkenhead, David Graham and Iain Wood are the regular members of the team although Andrew Wilkinson, Mark Christie and Steve Coverdale have all been called in to help out so far.

The only other unbeaten side are Springwell, who have won three and drawn one and for the summer are including Jim Stamas in their squad along with Tony Gelder, John Williamson, Alex Smith and David Forsberg. It should be an interesting match when the two meet.

Division Two

Old England TTC and North East Chinese Association are the early pacesetters, both remaining unbeaten after five matches and having played a draw when they met in the first match of the season. Old England are represented by Lynne Herrington, Jake Helm and Joe Muldowney whilst the Chinese side have included Ken Lee, Kit Robinson, Chin Yin Yu, and Chen Xuan Ji.

The Matfen A side of Alex Holiday, Dave Swan and John Henderson should also be a force to be reckoned with.

Sacriston Bombers are fielding a team of youngsters who are doing exceptionally well so far with two victories and two narrow defeats. Twelve year-old Peter Smallcombe is certainly a star of the future, having won 10 out of 12 of his matches to date, including victories over Helm and Herrington.

Division Three

Springwell's B team of Charlie Mouzon, Alan Livingstone and Michael Hope are top of this division but the Lanchester A side of Dave McAllister, Andrew Firth and young Thaaquib Saleem are only five points behind and have a game in hand. The recent meeting between the two ended up 6-4 in favour of Lanchester.

Byker B team and Brinkburn also look as though they could be in contention in this division.

Division Four

Two teams have started with four successive victories, Cramlington Corinthians squad of Adrian Barnes, Gus Poole, Pauline Long and Sam Nair, and Sacriston Comets represented by Colin Pritchard, Matthew Greenwood and Nikki and Debbie Irwin. The Corinthians currently have a five-point advantage and it promises to be a good contest when the two meet.

There are a number of newcomers in this division with Lanchester B and Brandon and Byshottles B and C competing for the first time.

Division Five

It is pleasing to see that there are a large number of young players in this division, many of them taking part in league play for the first time.

Matfen C came into the division at the last minute and have experienced players Tom Manuel, Richard Rayfield and Mark Perrin in their squad along with Raymond Lazereto but they, too, are using younger players.

So far the experience in the side is showing as they are unbeaten at the top of the table but they were given a

hard match when they visited Cramlington Magpies.

Youngsters Tim Bryce and Will Capps, in their first competitive season along with young Andrew Matfin made Manuel, Rayfield and young Dan Potter fight all the way, taking three from Rayfield and one from Potter before experience told and Matfen won 6-4.

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