



Leicester League: Pearson earns victory in thriller

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The first semi-final of the Leicester League's summer competition for the Elbow Tankard showed what good handicapping is all about, a pulsating tussle throughout that went right to the wire when the score stood at 9-9 with one set remaining.

The first three sets showed the way when they were all shared at 1-1 before Oscar White opened up a chink of daylight for Park Rangers when he beat Park Keepers' Kenny Obilaso two straight. Keepers fought back with Ben Stone again majoring in the doubles and coming home overall 3-1 in those to bring the score back level at 6-6.

George McClurkin had two sets after the doubles for Keepers and drew both against Dan Pearson and Max Huggins, sandwiching yet another thrilling 1-1 between Stone and White.

At 9-9 Pearson, receiving just one point against Obilaso, won 21-15, 21-10 to give Rangers the narrow 11-9 success, bringing his total to four from six, the same as White, with Huggins gaining two from four. No-one came away empty handed and nobody won them all. Terrific stuff.

When the dust had settled after sorting the Leicester and District League the coming season ended up with a loss of one team, down to 58, with the worrying trend of losing two clubs in Eagles and Leicestershire Police. However, with the Development League, in effect a junior section, expected to total over 40 teams the future still looks bright if we can retain their enthusiasm into adulthood.

A thrust towards recruiting others who have played table tennis in the past, not necessarily in a league, for social daytime sessions is also bearing fruit. Quite often, as is beginning to happen in the Leicester area, they suddenly find they have the bug again and look towards playing something a little more meaningful. Certainly the middle region age group between mid 20s to upper 40s requires urgent boosting of numbers.

At the end of the day having three full divisions of 12 teams with the other two only one down at 11 is a decent foundation to build upon.

Something tried locally for the first time last season for the middle region of league players was a daytime ladder league which featured 20 players as the recently relocated Knighton Park club have 10 tables available, and it proved extremely popular for those playing around the middle of division two to the middle of division four.

This is due to be played again this season. The idea was to encourage the possibility of extending both upwards

and downwards with a group featuring the top players, as well as a group from the bottom division and a half. Time will tell if this happens.

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