



Leicester & District: Rogers' maximum cannot stop Unicorn

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The long awaited clash of the two unbeaten teams vying at the top of Division One of the Leicester and District League saw Knighton Park's Chris Rogers in majestic form as he powered to a superb maximum to maintain his own unblemished individual record against the very solid in depth Unicorn.

Unicorn had received a blow just before the match when their own undefeated England International, Lois Peake, had to pull out with injury which also cost her place in the Commonwealth Federation Championships in India. But her team-mates proved up to the task as George Briskolas won his other two as did Jared Patel, while Tim Sheppard took that all-important fifth singles.

Karen Smith had beaten Sheppard first set of the match and the Park were 2-1 up at one point with Reza Kiani, the third KP player, agonisingly close with two of his sets needing a fifth game. In the end Patel and Briskolas beat the sibling partnership of Rogers and Smith 3-2 (11-9, 9-11, 11-3, 9-11, 11-8) in the doubles to clinch full points at 6-4.

Ajax Wolvey have made third position all their own having defeated both Desford Village and Holwell Works 8-2 with John Williams and Aiden Walsh emerging undefeated from both matches, good support being supplied by John Fuller and Mick Allsopp along the way.

There is a tussle at the bottom of the division against relegation with Desford and Holwell both being involved, as is Desford's second team who did their cause no harm by defeating the one team surely in line for the drop at the bottom, Electricity II. For Desford Alastair Hawthorne and Richard Hayes both notched three while Kevin Parker chipped in with two, losing to Sam Radenhurst.

A heartening local development over recent years has been the rise and rise of Winstanley Wizards who were founded as a table tennis club by Ken Oram and John Greening about four years ago. Last season they made their debut into the Leicester League, gaining promotion from Division Five and then entered a second team this season.

Since bringing in Phil Smith as coach earlier this year things have moved on at a good pace with 15-year-old Jack Kermode enjoying the elevation which culminated in a very good maximum against the top team in **Division Four**, Blaby and Whetstone II, in a 5-5 draw, support coming with one each from John Hurst and Chris Webster. Kermode is now on 85 per cent individually. For Blaby, Paul and Phill Hinson each won two and the doubles.

This progress for the Wizards also shows in the club's second team in Division Five where Dan Andrews, who is 14, has now completed his most recent four matches undefeated as he moves up the individual averages on 75 per cent, having already beaten Mike Eastell of Lutterworth Rotary, who is current top.

Another string to Winstanley's bow is 16-year-old Kelsey Andrews, also a Division Five player, who is branching out with a project of her own at Bosworth Academy to establish a table tennis club there, the emphasis very much being as a mixed club as she wants to encourage more girls to play. This enterprising youngster is soon to embark on a level one coaching course.

This leads nicely into the Leicester Development League, effectively the junior league, where we find, perhaps not surprisingly, all four teams in the top division from Knighton Park with KP1 Scorpions leading the way having won all three with a perfect 12 out of 12 by Aman Rashid, Jack Rogers and Adnan Ebrahim. The two man KP2 Bears are second, Oscar White and Rayan Kotecha having lost just the one match.

No less than 35 teams took part in this third session with the next session scheduled towards the end of January.

We are sad to announce the passing of one of the major stalwarts of Leicestershire table tennis, Harry Ward, who was in his 94th year. He was one of the founder members of Knighton Park well over half a century ago and held many offices for club, league and county over the years. Table tennis was his life and he will be sadly missed.

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