



Braintree individual: Davison and Hayden have champ in sights

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Steve Kerns will be hoping to join the five-wins club when he defends his men's singles title at the Braintree Table Tennis League individual tournament on Sunday.

But Paul Davison and Peter Hayden, already members of that club, will be out to thwart him.

Kerns and Davison have only one defeat each behind them in the league while Hayden, dogged by injury, has lost twice.

Others in the hunt include John Cleasby, Adam Buxton, Andy Holmes, Scott Dowsett and Simon Webber, of whom Holmes and the unpredictable Webber, who beat Kerns in the league and reached the semi-final last year, look the best bets to cause an upset.

For the first time for five years and only the second time in the last 10, the league will be holding a ladies' singles.

Lorraine Burgess has played in the league for many years but does not normally enter the tournament while Hannah Pitt is in her first season.

Burgess has had some good wins in Division Two while Pitt is unbeaten in Division Three and a close encounter could be in store.

Both also feature in the mixed doubles, again making only its second appearance in 10 years, and again looking wide open. Burgess is partnered by team-mate Ken Lewis, a men's singles semi-finalist last season, while Pitt is joined by her father Adrian, a player with a 50 per cent average in Division One.

The men's doubles has belonged to Kevin Gowlett for the past seven years, six of them partnered by Davison and once by Patrick Gilbert.

In his absence Davison has teamed up with Cleasby but they will be wary of the challenges posed by Kerns & Holmes as well as Webber & Dowsett, the top seeds.

Junior talent will be on display in the form of William and Alexander Bettley, who face each other in the boys' singles final, while the restricted singles – for second and third division players – could see a battle between Lewis and Glen Laing, two players more than capable of holding down a first division place.

Hayden has won the veterans' singles all seven times he has entered – he missed 2009 and last year – and will be hoping to add to that tally this year, especially as Davison, who reaches his 40th birthday in July, will be added to his opponents next season.

Kerns will be his main foe but again Holmes could spring a surprise.

The preliminary events take place on Friday, Saturday and Sunday with the finals beginning around 5.30 on Sunday evening.

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