



Leicester & District: Unicorn remain team to beat

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This season's fixtures in Division One of the Leicester & District League have worked out rather well with the top three teams of last season playing each other during the final three weeks of this term.

Very little has changed in their respective line ups so the vast chasm of 22 points between those three and the rest has an outstanding chance of repeating itself.

It is difficult to see anyone beating the defending champions, Unicorn, who prevailed last term with a 100% record as they have three players graded above the 300 points yardstick, bearing in mind there are only two others above that magical bar in the coming year.

Top graded Jared Patel at 345 leads the way with England ranked Lois Peake hot on his heels on 335 while Tim Sheppard at 303 also tip-toes over the line. Second placed club last term, Knighton Park, has Chris Rogers on 338 and he will be trying to make a dent in Unicorn's armoury along with team-mates Karen Smith, Les Baker and Reza Kiani.

There is one more player above 300 in Abbots Road's Dave Gannon at 308 and he could have a say in the individual standings but it is the overall strength in depth of Ajax Wolves that gave them the third team spot. No-one over 300 but all four in the team in the high 200's with John Fuller at 284 supported by Aiden Walsh, Jon Williams and Mick Allsopp.

While the top positions look exclusively between these three there will almost certainly be the usual nailbiting tussles at the bottom as teams try to avoid the relegated bottom two places.

Holwell Sports and Knighton Park II both avoided the drop by one point last term with an interesting move by James Morley who leaves the Park in favour of Holwell, leaving George McClurkin still spearheading Knighton but newcomers, Jandik Petr and Kevin Yang joining the fray alongside cadet Jack Rogers, who topped the Division

Two averages last time.

Syston Casuals and Electricity II came up from the second division in the knowledge that it is notoriously difficult for promoted teams to retain their status. Tomas Oravec joins father/son, Steve and Harry White for the Sparks while Clive Stretton, John Szostak, Bob Whittaker and Jason Woodfield make up the System team.

Desford Village still have a team in the top division but their second team were relegated to Division Two where they have Richard Hayes, a well above average first division player, spearheading an attempt to re-establish the higher status, a task that that looks eminently feasible.

The other 11 teams in the second sphere look so evenly balanced that a really tough season looks on the cards and it would not be surprising if there are several teams who will find themselves packed in mid-table with both promotion and relegation on the cards until deep into the season. Even Nomads up from Division Three look competitive enough to stay the course.

This will be the sector to keep a close eye on.

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