



Braintree League: Liberal strengthen grip

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For the past two seasons matches between Liberal A and Netts A were the ones that decided the destination of the Braintree Table Tennis League title.

Not so this season, as Netts have slipped down the table and it was little surprise when Liberal came out on top in their latest encounter.

The match was a personal success though for Netts' Paul Davison, who won all three of his singles, Netts' only wins of the night.

That included a 3-1 (11-6, 8-11, 11-6, 11-7) win over men's singles champion Peter Hayden and a win at 11-5 in the fifth game over Scott Dowsett, one of only two players to beat him this season.

It was Simon Webber who gave him most trouble. Davison was two games to one down and was taken to deuce in the fourth, before scraping home at 12-10 and then taking the fifth at 11-8.

Also of note was the first division debut of Derek Kennard, who has been coaching at Netts for the past two years but has not played league table tennis for 20 years. He has been grazing quietly in division three but showed that he belonged on a higher plane by stretching Dowsett to the full five games and Webber to four.

Second-placed Rayne A recovered from their surprise defeat to Sible Hedingham the previous week by dealing comfortably with second from bottom Black Notley B 9-1. Ian Whiteside and Steve Pennell were unbeaten but Steve Noble, playing up from division two, prevented the perfect scoreline with an excellent straight-games win over Ryan Pitt.

The teams in third and fourth place faced each other and it was the two-man Netts B team who unexpectedly emerged unscathed from all seven sets.

James Hicks gained revenge for his early season defeats by Hector Rogers and Adam Buxton, both of whom also came off second best against Steve Buer, whose win percentage this season is 30 behind Buxton's and nearly 20

lower than Rogers'.

Robin Armstrong also upset the formbook in Liberal B's draw with Rayne C when he overcame the formidable Alan Burgess, beaten only once, by Buxton, in his previous five matches.

Heddingham followed up their win over Rayne A with an important 6-4 victory over Notley A, one of the teams they need to keep above to avoid relegation. Andrew Huckson won his three singles for Notley.

The league has now reached its two-thirds point, where all teams have played each other twice, apart from postponements. The current division one table looks like this:

	P	W	D	L	A	P
Liberal A	18	17	1	0	31	149
Rayne A	18	13	1	4	61	119
Netts B	17	11	1	5	63	107
Rayne B	18	9	6	3	79	101
Netts A	17	7	3	7	74	96
Rayne C	18	7	3	8	106	74
Liberal B	16	3	4	9	93	67
Sible Heddingham	17	6	1	10	112	58
Black Notley B	17	1	4	12	120	50
Black Notley A	18	0	2	16	131	49

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