



Braintree League: James ends Crouchman's run

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Posted On: March 06, 2017

After 38 sets Brandon Crouchman's unbeaten run in division one of the Braintree Table Tennis League has at last come to an end.

It was no great surprise that Rik James was the man to take it away from him. James, a past Chelmsford League champion and eight times winner of the Colchester League men's singles, was making only his second appearance for Sible Hedingham but sailed past the young pretender – more than 30 years his junior – in straight games (11-6, 11-9, 11-7).

Scott Dowsett and Simon Webber suffered similarly but James did end up on the losing side in the doubles when he and Mark Brown found Crouchman and Webber too much for them. Liberal A also took all the other singles for a 7-3 win.

Crouchman's run was not the only one to end, but the other one took on a more positive hue.

The division's bottom team Black Notley A picked up their first victory of the season, at the 19th attempt.

Netts B were on the receiving end, but it was an unusual looking Netts B. Maria Boulton had previously played seven matches, Graham Farmer two and Oliver Hicks one.

Boulton won twice and Farmer and Hicks once each but Andrew Huckson beat all three of them to lead his team to a 6-4 win that takes them off the bottom.

Replacing them are Notley's B team, who lost 7-3 to Netts A where they ironically faced James Hicks, normally in the B team. He won his three singles, with Victor Chan taking two for the losers.

Second-placed Rayne A had a comfortable 8-2 win over Liberal B where Alan Burgess and Steve Pennell were unbeaten while Hector Rogers picked up three wins in Rayne B's 6-4 win over Rayne C.

Rayne E have returned to the top of division two after an 8-2 win over their own F team. Dave Miller was

unbeaten while the reliably unpredictable Paul Wellington beat Dave Moles but lost to Ted Sims, which is not the normal way round.

Notley C relied on Gordon Fairchild's unbeaten evening to bring them a draw at Felsted RBL A, which leaves them level with Rayne E, but from one more match.

Nomads are now only two points behind them after an 8-2 win over a Rayne G team with only two players, one a reserve. Steve Willis was responsible for both their wins.

Liberal C's win by the same score against Felsted B keeps them in touch while Richard Whiteside's three wins helped Rayne D to a 7-3 win over Notley D that moves them above Rayne G.

In division three Jim Davy hit an excellent patch of form in beating both Kierlan Richards and Joe Belsom in Notley E's 7-3 defeat by leaders Netts C.

Derek Kennard played up from Netts' D team in that match while his own team had to do without him against Rayne J, where they were held to a draw.

Takunda Nerutanga, a student at Anglia Ruskin University and new to competitive play, illustrated his progress over the season by taking his three singles for Notley F in their 8-2 win over Rayne I, where he was the only one to beat Tim Townsend.

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