



Braintree League: Holders tumble out of cup

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The Braintree Table Tennis League handicap cup holders and favourites have been knocked out in the quarter-final of this year's competition.

Handicap events inevitably favour younger players whose form improves beyond their original handicap and Netts C took full advantage of that to take the cup home last season.

They looked to be on course this year as well but came up against stern resistance from players whose junior days are mostly some way behind them.

The total age of the Rayne A players who faced them is in excess of 150 (Lee McHugh is 27) and they brought their considerable experience to bear.

Against the current division three leaders, McHugh, Steve Pennell and Dave Whiting knuckled down to the task and allowed their opponents only one set before reaching the required five they needed to progress.

Pennell won two out of two despite giving away a 14 point start up to 21. McHugh, with a 12-point disadvantage, also won twice while Whiting, from five points down, won one. Max Plumridge's 21-13, 21-14 win over Whiting was Netts' only consolation.

Netts D kept alive the club's chances of keeping the cup on their shelves when they overcame Rayne H.

Barry Mouser took advantage of an 11-point start to beat Joe Meleschko but two wins each from Michael Goodchild and Peter Hardy plus one from Meleschko put Netts through.

They will be joined in the semi-final by Black Notley H who removed their own C team.

Takunda Nerutanga and Mel Cooch took two each and Steve Baines one for the H team while Gordon Fairchild won both singles he played for the C team.

Netts C had come across Dave Whiting earlier when he represented Rayne J in a division three match – and this time Max Plumridge found him too much to handle, ending his winning run after seven matches. Joe Belsom also surprisingly succumbed to Ian Rubens as Netts scraped home 6-4.

Tim Gowers and Roger Hasler, whose unexpected form was highlighted here three weeks ago, again did the unanticipated in Rayne H's 8-2 win over their own I team.

It was Hasler rather than Tim Townsend or Brian Dixon who won the one singles for the I team and Gowers, rather than Charles Wilkinson, who remained unbeaten for the H team. Dave Allinson was also unbeaten.

Notley E took all ten against their own G team while Liam Ebbs and Paul Martin took the seven between them in the I team's 7-3 win over the H team.

Leon Hewitt and John Wickins took two each for Notley F against Netts D but Netts took the other six.

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