



Braintree League: Crouchman bags singles title

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Beaten only once in the league this season, Brandon Crouchman confirmed his status as Braintree Table Tennis League's leading player when he landed the men's singles at his first attempt.

Crouchman, 21, showed maturity and poise as he came through a tough semi-final against former champion Paul Davison before a more straightforward passage against Andy Holmes in the final. He has a flowing, almost effortless style but packs an almighty punch when he attacks the ball.

The set against Davison swung one way and then the other as both players showed a determination not to open the game up for their opponent to attack.

The tightness of the game sometimes led to mistakes and in the end it was Crouchman who made fewer, edging Davison out at 14-12 in the fifth game.

In the other semi-final, Holmes, who had survived a scare in the quarter-final when Zach Harrington held match points against him before going down 12-10 in the fifth, had just a little too much nous and venom for Ken Lewis and got home in four games.

Crouchman added a second title when he and Scott Dowsett, who have been playing together since they were cadets, took the men's doubles title with a win over Davison and Simon Webber.

This was another one that went to the wire with Davison again on the end of a deuce-in-the-fifth reverse.

All four players, two left-right combinations, were anxious, sometimes too anxious, to get in early and produced some flowing points. Davison and Webber pulled back from 6-10 to 10-10 in the final game but Crouchman and Dowsett hit back to take the final two points.

Davison did not go home empty handed. In his first season in the 40-plus ranks he took home the veterans' singles trophy with a victory in the final over Lewis.

The Nomads player tried to break up Davison's game with blocks and chops off his unorthodox rubbers, but his opponent had the all-round game to cope and eased home in three straight games.

Lewis was also on the receiving end in the over-50s singles, an event he has won twice, against Steve Pennell, three times a runner-up.

Both players relied on canniness allied to the occasional thumping hit and it was Pennell's ability to produce the unexpected that helped him over the line in three close games.

But for Lewis it was fourth time lucky. His final visit to the table enabled him to capture the restricted singles for the second year running with a victory over Matthew Laws, who had earlier taken the division two singles with a surprise win over Steve Noble.

Laws, in his first season in division two – he won the division three singles last year – showed why he is so highly rated with solid performances against two of the league's more unfathomable players.

Against Lewis, who has not lost in division two this season, it was too much, but Laws was not fazed by Noble's side-spin and inside-out hitting and took that title in four games.

In the division one singles there was a first title for Lee McHugh and a first finals night appearance for Keith Martin.

This was yet another set that was decided by two points in the fifth game as McHugh came from behind to win. He lost the first two games before moving up a gear and then had to recover from 5-1 down and then 9-7 down in the final game before taking the last four points.

There was a double success for Takunda Nerutanga, new to the league this season and another player who has shown great advances. He won the handicap singles and the handicap doubles with Lewis.

Results

Men's singles final: Brandon Crouchman beat Andy Holmes 3-0 (11-6, 11-6, 11-4).

Men's doubles: Crouchman and Scott Dowsett beat Davison and Simon Webber 3-2 (11-5, 8-11, 11-4, 10-12, 12-10).

Veterans' singles: Davison beat Lewis 3-0 (11-6, 11-7, 11-6).

Over 50s singles: Steve Pennell beat Lewis 3-0 (11-9, 11-7, 14-12).

Restricted singles: Lewis beat Matthew Laws 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-4).

Division one singles: Lee McHugh beat Keith Martin 3-2 (9-11, 8-11, 11-5, 11-5, 11-9).

Division two singles: Laws beat Steve Noble 3-1 (11-6, 11-6, 7-11, 12-10).

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