



Braintree League: Rayne in position to reign

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Rayne A have put themselves in a position to become the first team since 2004 to win both the team and handicap knockout cups in the Braintree Table Tennis League.

They won their semi-finals in both competitions to give them a chance of becoming the first division one side to win the handicap cup since 2008 and of regaining the team knockout cup that they won three times from 2012 to 2014.

And in a good week for the club, it is their F and G teams who will contest the restricted cup final.

Rayne A, who were the team to do the double in 2004, had a tougher than expected tussle against their own B team in the team cup semi-final and only sneaked home 5-4 after winning the final doubles.

Hector Rogers took his recent good league form into the match and beat both Ryan Pitt and John Andrews. Adam Buxton added a point with a win over Steve Pennell and the two of them took their doubles, but it was the higher-ranked side who just clung on.

Not so in the other semi-final where Netts' B team overcame their A team in a repeat of the 2015 final.

Fresh from his success in reaching the final of the men's singles a few days earlier, Andy Holmes scored the all-important win over Paul Davison that set the B team on their way to victory.

Holmes also beat Derek Kennard and wins for James Hicks over Kennard and Chris Buer over James Mullane plus a doubles were enough to see them through.

Rayne A's handicap team of Pennell, Lee McHugh and Dave Whiting had a number of tight games against Black Notley H but held their nerve when it mattered.

Pennell, giving away 14, crept home 22-20 in the third game against Declan Baines while McHugh had a win of 21-18 in the third against Steve Baines (off +12) and 22-20, 22-20 over Takunda Nerutanga.

It was Whiting's comeback from losing 21-4 in the first game to beat Steve Baines 23-21, 21-18 that saw them through.

Netts D's passage to the final was altogether more straightforward, a 9-0 dismissal of Felsted RBL A. Joe Meleschko, Michael Goodchild and Peter Lewis were the successful combination.

Both the restricted cup semi-finals finished 5-4 although in both cases the result had been decided before the final doubles.

At 4-3 down Felsted looked like taking the match to a final set against Rayne G when Dave Swash opened up a two-game lead against Steve Willis, but Willis knuckled down to take the final three games 11-7, 11-7, 11-8 to take his team through.

For Rayne F, it was Ted Sims' unexpected win over Notley D's Sean Clift that set them on the road. He and Dave Marsh won their two singles and combined to win the doubles.

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