

British League Round 1 – South & Midlands

Author: Russell Moore

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Division One South & Midlands

OLOP Impact, runners-up last Season gave every indication that they will again be challenging for a Premier Division play-off place. They have yet to face second-placed Mossford I (6 points) but in none of their games was the match result dependent on their winning the last game. OLOP's first game against Kingfisher Reading I provided them with their hardest match and they eventually won 5-3. Doubles for Dave Barr and Stephen Gertsen and a tight 12-10, 11-9, 10-12, 12-10 9-11 success for Neil Wright against Daniel O'Connell gave them the ascendancy. Kingfisher no. four Nathan Thomas won twice, beating both Neil Wright (3-1) and Chris Bush (again 3-1). Hari Gehlot came in for the Saturday afternoon game against Sportingbet Guernsey I and OLOP produced an even more assured performance to win 6-2. Dave Barr did not drop an end, beating Alice Loveridge (11-7, 11-2, 11-3) as well as Gary Dodd (11-5, 11-9, 11-9) whilst Hari Gehlot played his part with hard-earned wins over Phil Ogier (12-10, 11-9, 11-9) and Alice Loveridge (6-11, 12-10, 11-5, 9-11, 11-4). The big shock came in game no. six when Oliver Langlois beat Stephen Gertsen 11-8, 12-14, 4-11, 11-6, 11-9 – Gertsen won 19 out of 19 singles last Season in this Division.

OLOP made it three wins out of three in round three by beating Fusion II 6-2. Stephen Gertsen was back to winning ways beating John Dennison 3-1 and Tom Hughes 3-0 although England no. 21 Veteran Dave Barr was found wanting. John Dennison played superbly to get the better of the Berkshire defender 11-9, 11-8, 11-7. Fusion's Martin Smith hardly put a foot wrong as he beat Hari Gehlot by an impressive 11-7, 11-3, 11-7 scoreline. OLOP completed what was a very satisfactory opening weekend's play by getting the better of Ashford I 7-1. Matt Pernet, unbeaten in 28 singles in Division two last year found it much harder in this division. He missed out 7-11, 6-11, 11-8, 10-12 against Stephen Gertsen and 4-11, 11-9, 8-11, 5-11 against David Barr. John Robinson, with a victory over Neil Wright was Ashford's only winner.

Mossford, the Ilford League Champions, and who rather uniquely field the same quartet of players in the British League also stayed undefeated. They were unlucky to face Fusion II with the inform England no. 49 Emran Hussain in the Fusion line-up. Emran was on top form, beating both Didier Ngoma (11-7, 11-7, 11-8) and Euan Liddle (11-5, 11-6, 13-11). Elsewhere, there were some real tussles. Simon Phillipz did well to get the better of Ewan Liddle 10-12, 12-10, 15-13, 11-5 but he was found wanting against Matt Spero (7-11, 11-9, 16-14, 6-11, 6-11). Keith Lesser finally secured a draw for Mossford by getting the better of David Williams 7-11, 14-16, 11-4, 12-10, 11-9 in a tense deciding eighth game. The latest round of matches between perennial rivals Mossford I and Sportingbet Guernsey I finished level. Oliver Langlois made his mark with a fine 14-16, 3-11, 11-5, 11-9, 11-9 win over Didier Ngoma but it wasn't enough to earn the Channel I Islanders victory. Keith Lesser held on to beat Phil Ogier 13-11, 12-10, 13-15, 11-8 to tie the scores. Mossford's 7-1 win over Cippenham I represented a fine conclusion to their weekend, with Didier Ngoma, Euan Liddle and Matt Spero all staying undefeated. Wins against Mossford had to be earned the hard way and Robert Hansell was up to the task. He beat Keith Lesser 12-14, 11-7, 6-11, 11-7, 12-10.

Sportingbet Guernsey I did well to beat Fusion II 6-2. Their younger team members – Gary Dodd, Alice Loveridge and Oliver Langlois all stayed unbeaten on this occasion. Alice Loveridge, looking increasingly comfortable at this level – beat both John Dennison (11-8, 11-6, 11-9) and Tom Hughes (11-6, 11-9, 12-10). Tom Hughes and Farhat Rasul both beat Phil Ogier – Farhat scraping home by a last gasp 11-7, 12-10, 3-11, 8-11, 11-9 margin.

Division Three South & Midlands

Woodfield II (Steve Bertie, Billy Pegg, Andrew Dixon, Lester Bertie and Nabil Khalfey) who scored a maximum 28 points out of 28 last Season have started in a similar fashion this year. They powered to 8-0 wins against Generation 2 II, Bedford Modern II and Brighton City although they were hard pushed to see off Keyworth 5-3. Hung Kei Li (a former child prodigy if my memory serves me correctly ?) gave them plenty of problems. He

produced some superb play to beat Billy Pegg 11-7, 11-8, 11-9 and he only went down to the hard-hitting Steve Bertie by the narrowest of margins 8-11, 13-11, 6-11, 11-8, 13-15. It was their no. two player Michael George who caused them the most damage. He beat Steve Bertie in four ends : 8-11, 11-4, 11-8, 11-6 and added a second win with an excellent 7-11, 14-12, 12-14, 11-8, 12-10 success against Andrew Dixon.

However, as dominant as Woodfield were last Season they will be only too aware of a very tricky challenge this campaign. Yaxley RBL have also won their four matches and with a team headed by Ian Musk and John Hall they represent very tricky opponents indeed. Former England top 50 player Musk and current England no.153 Jon Hall were both undefeated. With strong support from still-improving players Daniel Fielding and Kieran Smith they are also very strong for this Division. Yaxley's closest match was in round one, and as with Woodfield it was against Keyworth. Ian Musk and Jon Hall both beat Hung Kei Li on this occasion and Ian Musk also saw off Michael George 11-5, 11-9, 11-9. In fact Yaxley weren't far off winning 7-1. Two of Keyworth's wins were by the closest possible margin and both involved the luckless Daniel Fielding. He lost 9-11, 6-11, 11-7, 11-7, 14-16 to Wing Yuen Wu and 8-11, 11-13, 11-6, 11-7, 11-13 to Michael George. On this showing it looks a pretty even contest between Woodfield II and Yaxley RBL. Game on !. The two sides meet for the first time on Sunday morning on Sunday 12 December 2010. It is also worth noting that Yaxley have the very hard-hitting Dale Barham signed on as well.

Things are looking grim for Brighton City. They failed to get off the mark and this included a 6-2 defeat against Bedford Modern II – Bedford's only success. Tim Holtam gave Brighton the lead by beating Josh Robinson 11-9, 11-9, 11-9 and Brighton led 2-0 at one stage after Tony Rowell had beaten John Alsop in four ends. However, it was Bedford who finished the stronger. John Alsop scored an excellent 11-5, 12-14, 11-9, 11-2 win over Tim Holtam and Josh Robinson an equally important 11-6, 11-9, 11-8 success against Leo Assisi. Bedford Modern held the advantage and Oliver Autin increased it by beating Tony Rowell 11-7, 11-7, 11-5. James Coleman rounded off a very good Bedford team effort by getting the better of Majid Jafargholi 11-6, 11-7, 10-12, 11-3.

Brighton will feel a little hard done by to have lost 8-0 to Woodfield II. Games four, five and six were all decided in the fifth end but as is often the case it was the more successful team on the day who came up trumps each time. Nabil Khalfey beat Leo Assisi 11-6, 12-10, 9-11, 9-11, 11-9 whilst Tim Holtam succumbed to Steve Bertie despite having led 3-2. Steve pulled through 11-7, 7-11, 7-11, 11-8, 11-3. Tony Rowell also missed out in five ends against Andy Dixon. He gave an excellent account of himself before succumbing 4-11, 11-6, 11-3, 6-11, 7-11.

Division Four South & Midlands

ELGRE Nottingham (with a maximum eight points) are the early pace-setters and rather alarmingly for their opponents they beat one of the sides with six points – York Gardens IV, 7-1. This was a top-class performance from the Nottingham team not least because they slipped 1-0 behind when Deepak Dangi beat Andy Portlock in five ends. Thereafter, ELGRE really put it together with John Taylor, Adam Ellis and David Greaves carrying all before them. Portlock made no mistake in his second singles downing the challenge of Simon Holohan 11-8, 13-11, 11-8.

Kingfisher II made a good game of it and ELGRE will have been relieved to have won 6-2. ELGRE came out on top in three of the four games that were decided in the fifth end. Andy Portlock had to pull out all the stops to get the better of Keith Newell 11-8, 7-11, 9-11, 11-6, 13-11 whilst Adam Ellis had to work hard to see off Paul Savage 11-8, 7-11, 9-11, 11-6, 13-11. In the last game Paul Savage gave the score a respectable feel to it by beating Jane Ellis but only after a real struggle 6-11, 11-8, 8-11, 18-16, 11-7.

Woodfield (UK Deaf) represented by Nick Gilmour, James Meyers, Andrew Calloway and Chris Angus are the other side with six points and they picked up wins against Waterside (5-3), Westfield III (6-2) and Kingfisher II (6-2). They missed out against Westbury 5-3 despite the fact that their top player Nick Gilmour won twice. Good wins as well : 8-11, 12-10, 12-14, 11-4, 11-5 against David Walton and by an even closer 12-10, 14-12, 7-11, 8-11, 13-11 margin against Andrew Hodges. Chris Angus scored their third victory, and he beat David Marshall 11-8, 11-3, 8-11, 8-11, 11-8 in the last game.

Westfield picked up their sole point against Kingfisher II, fighting back from 3-0 down to lead 4-3. Matthew Horrocks started the fight-back by beating Paul Savage 6-11, 11-5, 11-9, 11-6 and Terry Cardwell got in on the act by beating Keith Newell 9-11, 11-6, 7-11, 12-10, 11-7. Kingfisher were losing their grip on the match and Sam

Wildman made the score 3-3 by beating James Olsson 8-11, 11-8, 11-7, 11-5. Matthew Horrocks picked up his second win. He produced a confident display to win 11-9, 11-6, 11-9 against Eric Van Low and suddenly it was Westfield who were in the driving seat. Could they take both points when at one stage they were searching desperately for their first win? The answer turned out to be "no". Paul Savage made up for his earlier defeat by getting the better of Scott Dixon 11-7, 11-8, 11-6.

New team Ilfracombe Pirates failed to get off the mark, but, they did not do too badly against fourth-placed Westbury. Only two games were decided 3-0 and Francis Westcott certainly made his mark. He beat both Philip Marshall 11-6, 12-14, 11-9, 11-8 and David Marshall 11-9, 5-11, 7-11, 11-7, 12-10. Dominic Sussex (a good name for a Pirate?) also came very close to getting his name on the scoresheet and he had his chances against David Walton before the fourth game slipped away. Walton eventually came out on top : 11-7, 8-11, 8-11, 13-11, 11-4.

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