



Braintree League: Teams eye promotion tussle

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Promotion to division one of the Braintree Table Tennis League was one of the harder fought battles last season and this year could see a repeat as the season gets under way this week.

With the disbandment of Black Notley B – Andrew Pagett has, temporarily at least, retired, Victor Chan has been promoted to the A team while Tim Huxtable will lead the C team – there is no relegated team to include in the mix of potential candidates.

And that leaves the new Notley B – last year's C team – and Liberal C, who last year had a tussle for second place, as the most likely candidates.

Liberal have kept together their nucleus of Garry Fryatt, Gareth Davies, Jon Fieldsend, Barry Evans and Dave Hardy while Notley B have been strengthened by the addition of Patrice Elonge to the twin spearhead of Gordon Fairchild and Dave Parker.

Elonge returned to the game, after some 20 years out of action, towards the end of last season and has been rediscovering his skills in the summer league.

Nomads eventually pipped Liberal C to third place last year after Liberal failed to complete their programme, but with fewer appearances expected from their main man Ken Lewis, unbeaten last season, they are unlikely to feature quite so highly.

Many eyes will be on Netts' D team, promoted with a convincing record from division three. Joe Belsom, Max Plumridge and Kierlan Richards are still juniors and will have continued their improvement over the summer. A top-half finish is certainly not out of the question.

A few eyes too will turn to Netts E where two former division one winners, Fred Evans, returning after a lengthy absence, and Graham Farmer are reunited alongside Joe Meleschko, behind only Derek Kennard in last year's division three averages, and Liam Ebbs, who moves across and up a division from Black Notley.

Sadly, Felsted RBL B have had to pull out of division two at the last minute which means the C team will choose from last year's relegated B team, plus the Butler family – Ian, Ashley and Nick – as well as Mike Pitt, who steps down from the A team.

Clearly they will be the team to beat in division three.

Rayne H, second last year, can be expected to challenge again while Notley E, only two points behind them last year, will hope to improve on that after adding new signing Stewart Ireland, another player returning after many years out of the game.

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