



Leicester & District: Unicorn must do without Patel

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Division One of the Leicester & District League has been somewhat dominated by Unicorn over the last few years and they still look strong with Lois Peake, George Briskolas and Tim Sheppard leading the pack.

But they are without their main spearhead in Jared Patel who was undefeated last term, as he was in one of the previous two seasons, and they could well miss him should any of the main three be unavailable at any time.

Plenty of teams are poised to take any advantage of any wobbles, not least Ajax Wolvey who have been knocking on the door with the same quartet for some time. Mick Allsopp, John Fuller, Aidan Walsh and Jon Williams all perform well and cover for each other with plenty of strength in depth. They will be keen to exploit any cracks should Unicorn not measure up to their most recent performances.

This goes for Knighton Park, although this team is without two of its mainstays as the club split their strengths between their top two teams. Chris Rogers still leads the way and is probably second behind Peake in official ranking points, while Reza Kiani also retains his place. Coming in is Rogers' son, Jack, who performed well in the top sphere last term in their second team, and Adam Cross who was shaping very well, indeed, until a couple of years ago when deciding to take time out.

This means the Park's second team also looks very useful with Karen Smith spearheading, ahead of Les Baker, George McClurkin and, newcomer, Rebecca George. The sparks could fly when Smith opposes brother and nephew in Chris and Jack Rogers later in the season.

Electricity are another team who hover on the fringes near the top and are always capable of springing some surprises with David Grundy, Mat Hobday and Andy Lebutt on call.

Other teams to watch include Thringstone with Maurice Newman and Trevor Kerry at the helm, needing someone to step forward at number three, while Arnesby and Abbots Road rely perhaps just a little too much on,

respectively, Abraham Conteh and Dave Gannon.

Division Two, certainly not for the first time, looks very open, both at the top and the bottom. Holwell Works came down last term but certainly have the depth to gain immediate return to division one being the only team with four players above the 200 grade mark in Martin Brunning, Tony Fox, James Morley and Dave Roche.

Electricity's third team have Adam and Russell Pettitt at the helm with three largely unknowns joining them while Regent Sports have a decent chance with Charlie Bateman improving all the time, together with Martin Bolton and Kevin Sanderson. Arnesby II cannot be ruled out. True, they have just been promoted from the third division, but if Rhys Emery can continue to improve in leaps and bounds they may have enough depth to challenge.

Division Three has some interesting new players on view. If Tony Gil plays for Nomads then their chances of promotion will soar, especially if Steve Andrews can dig in for a few. Himansu Mishra topped the division four averages last term when Winstanley Wizards were promoted and looked unbeatable towards the end. Continued improvement with support from Dan Andrews will make this team very difficult to beat.

Meanwhile Abbots Road III seem to have gained the services of the elusive Richard Martin who, combined with Steve Pratt, should be another team challenging near the top.

The two lower divisions inevitably have a number of completely new players coming into the league which makes it very difficult to assess what might happen. It is interesting to note two very useful players in Division Five in Jason Prescott who is playing for new club, Fleckney, and is graded around 50 percent in Division Two, while Desford's John Lenton is a 50 percent Division Three standard.

The League begins this week.

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