



Braintree League: Netts shade battle of top two

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The first meeting of the season between two of the top teams in the Braintree Table Tennis League produced an evening of fluctuating fortunes.

The match between Netts A and Rayne A, the two teams most likely to challenge champions Liberal A for the title, featured a set of evenly matched players where the result remained in the balance throughout.

In the end it was Netts who triumphed 6-4 but it was Rayne's Hector Rogers who took home the most notable scalp.

He beat former men's singles champion Terry Dowsett, unbeaten up to that point, 3-1 (11-8, 6-11, 11-7, 11-8). But in the spirit of an unpredictable match, he lost his other two singles.

Netts' new signing, the Frinton-based Gary Cattermole, won twice but missed out in straight games to Steve Pennell.

Earlier Netts had a 7-3 victory over Liberal B, where both Adrian Pitt and Andrew Huckson scored surprising wins over Andy Holmes, runner-up in last season's men's singles, while Rayne beat Black Notley A 10-0.

Liberal A took all 10 sets from Netts C and their two-man team took all seven against Liberal B.

Netts B and Rayne B both won twice. Netts B had a 7-3 win over Rayne C, for whom Lee McHugh was unbeaten, and a 10-0 win over Rayne D. Rayne B also beat Rayne D 10-0 and added a 7-3 win over Notley A.

Matches like Netts A v Rayne A where every player won at least one and lost at least one are still fairly rare, and yet there were three examples in division two.

The Notley D – Felsted RBL A match featured the first defeat this season for Richard Baxter, downed 3-0 (11-6, 11-9, 11-7) by Sean Clift.

But Clift went on to lose 11-9 in the fifth game to Richard Upson, who had been unexpectedly beaten by Bruce Wickham 11-2 in the fifth. Felsted won the match 6-4.

Leaders Notley B were held to a draw by Rayne E, the only unbeaten team in the division. Notley's new signing Neil Freeman won twice but was beaten by Richard Whiteside.

The other all-beat-all match was Notley C's 6-4 win over Rayne G. Notley's Leon Hewitt scored an excellent win over Steve Siggs, but lost to Steve Willis, who lost to Tim Huxtable and Bryan Speller, who both lost to Siggs.

Perhaps the week's major surprise was Barrie Applegate's win over Fred Evans in Nomads' draw with Netts E.

Applegate was without a win in his first four matches while Evans had wiped the floor with the strong Liberal C team in his last match. And all seemed to be going the way of the form book when Evans won the first two games 11-6, 11-5.

But Applegate then found his measure, sneaked the third game 12-10 and then took the last two 11-4, 11-8.

In the other match in the division, Dave Marsh was unbeaten as Rayne F beat Netts D 7-3.

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