



Braintree League: Liberal win could prove crucial

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The first crunch match in the Braintree Table Tennis League has gone the way of the champions Liberal A.

For the past few seasons – last year was an exception – it has been the matches between Liberal and Netts A that have decided the championship so Liberal's 7-3 win could be a vital step on the way to retaining their title.

It was a match in which Brandon Crouchman, surprisingly beaten in his previous match by Victor Chan, recovered his touch and won his three singles.

But Simon Webber can lay claim to the tag of player of the match. Often in the shadow of his teammates in the past, he turned in a sparkling performance to join Crouchman on the unbeaten step – and that included a victory over five-times men's singles champion Paul Davison.

Liberal's only regret was that Scott Dowsett chose to have an off night, losing all three, including to his father Terry.

The match ended Netts' run of seven successive wins but they will need to turn it on again if they are to challenge even for the runners-up spot, currently held by the consistent Rayne A team.

Rayne's 8-2 victory over Netts C, in which Adam Buxton was unbeaten, took them to within five points of Liberal A.

Rayne B matched that scoreline in beating Netts B, who gave a debut to the club's latest Ipswich-based recruit Colin Bennett, one of five new signings in the A and B teams this season.

He scored his team's one singles win but Ian Whiteside and Ryan Pitt both won their three sets for Rayne.

Liberal B had little difficulty taking all 10 off a two-man Rayne D while the two teams in seventh and eighth

places, Rayne C and Black Notley A, enjoyed a tight evening before Rayne crept away with six points.

Felsted RBL C continue to stride away in division three. After a draw in their opening match they have won everything since by either 10-0 or 9-1. Their last two matches, against Notley G and Rayne J, had the latter scoreline with Dean Wood unbeaten in both.

The two teams behind them, Notley E and Rayne H, shared the points, with Jamie Brooks unbeaten for Notley. Notley also had a 10-0 win over Rayne J while Rayne H beat their own I team 8-2.

Notley F twice took on a team from their own club, a two-man team of Takunda Nerutanga and Declan Baines taking all they could against the H team while two wins for the G team's Alan Billing, plus the doubles, produced the same scoreline in the second match. Nerutanga was unbeaten in that one as well.

Michael Goodchild, who won only ten out of 73 last season, has made considerable strides since and won his three singles for the first time in his career for Netts F against Notley H.

That gave Netts a 6-4 win and took his own average up to 50 per cent.

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