



Clacton & District: Panthers in charge

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With the players of the Clacton & District League taking a well-earned rest over the Christmas and New Year period, there's time to reflect on the season so far – and what is yet to come.

In **Division One** James Denyer and Sam Hume have been in scintillating form for Nomads Panthers which has seen the five-times champions open up a 10-point lead at the top, with a match in hand over their nearest rivals.

It would take a brave, or foolish, pundit to predict anything other than a sixth title for the all-conquering Panthers come next April.

Walton A, headed by Gary Young and well-supported by Gavin Price, Kevin James and Paul Woolnough, currently lie second and the battle for the runners-up spot could well be between them and last year's second-placed team Windsor Condors, for whom Greg Green has been a re-assuring presence in the often-absence of main man, Colin Stallwood.

Brotherhood C's new-look side has enjoyed an excellent first half and they could yet challenge for a top-two spot whilst Brotherhood B, with Gracie Edwards ever-improving, continue to impress.

Gary Cattermole has been in good nick for Windsor Eagles, as has Paul Hume for Nomads Lions, which has seen both teams end the first half-season in the middle of the table alongside those perpetual mid-table inhabitants Walton B.

Andy Vincent for Windsor Hawks and Peter Burrows for Walton C are the mainstays of their respective teams, and recent good results have seen both teams move away from the relegation zone.

And although neither the Hawks nor Walton C can be complacent, Windsor Kestrels and Brotherhood D remain the two teams fighting it out in the relegation places. With only two points currently separating them, and with the possibility of only one team being relegated, the struggle to avoid bottom place could be crucial come the end of the season.

Five teams have caught the eye in **Division Two** during the season so far but, as the old year fades and the new year comes into view, it's Lawford, for whom Paul Hewitt and Richard Spence have been dominant, and the all-round talent of John Marshall's Nomads Tigers who've edged away from their rivals to set up what could be an intriguing two-way fight to the finish.

All of which seems likely to mean that three Brotherhood sides – Barry Allen's Brotherhood F, Tricia Salter's Brotherhood H and Graham Parkes' Brotherhood I – will be left to battle it out for the minor places. But it could be their matches against Lawford and the Tigers in the second-half will have a crucial bearing on the eventual destination of the title.

Windsor Harriers and Windsor Buzzards have assumed their traditional mid-table positions where they've been joined by Nomads Jaguars and Walton E, for whom Jared Chelski and Daniel Young have been outstanding.

Windsor Magpies, boosted by the late signing of promising junior Olly Rampton, have moved clear of the bottom places which leaves Brotherhood E, despite the efforts of Duncan Dunne, and Walton D, who've missed the calm presence of Rivhu Khan, as the two teams threatened with the drop.

In past seasons **Division Three** has often been a walk in the park for one or two outstanding teams but this year the picture looks less clear-cut.

Brotherhood G's strong squad, which includes Mark Beckham, Paul Metcalf and a fit-again Graham Healey, currently lead the table by just two points from Windsor Penguins for whom Alan Charman and Debra Found have been in the forefront of a determined promotion charge.

The admirable form of young Liam Harris has seen Nomad Lynx move into third position but, whereas they may not have the all-round strength to maintain a promotion push, the Nomads Caracals' squad, which includes Chris Jones, Denise Thompson and Vic Little, could well mount a challenge.

Nomads Pumas continue to be as competitive as they've been for many years but they seem to have found a niche in mid-table this year, a place to which Brotherhood J have also risen, thanks to new-signing Dan Still and improving juniors Maci Harvey and Harley Wood.

Windsor Kites have become valuable members of the League over the past eight years and now have no need to worry about finishing bottom where, this season at the start of the New Year, there are three teams – Nomads Leopards, Nomads Ocelots and Windsor Swallows – separated by a mere three points.

* The first of the League's Tournaments, the Handicapped Singles, takes place on Saturday 3rd February at Windsor's St James Hall. Full details will shortly be sent to all players.

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