



Leicester & District: Thrilling cup action

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It's cup week with matches in the Leicester & District League's semi-finals as well as the Rose Johnson Challenge Bowl organised by the County Association which is at the quarter-final stage.

I am always surprised so few enter the latter as it has a unique format being a team handicap rather than individual, inevitably coming up with exciting matches with four-a-side where each plays one game to 21 against the other four. Only the Leicester League has supported it in recent years.

Typical was the match between The Drifters and KP Up and Coming. KP, with the likes of Karen Smith from Division One, gave their opponents a 138 start, meaning 34.5 points each four-game segment was needed. As very often happens KP were going well to the three-quarter stage and were now just 26 adrift, well up with the target.

But the final four games so often take on the look of American Football – the nearer you get to the goal line the more difficult it is to tip-toe over for a touchdown. Roger Burley did well for The Drifters by scoring 17 against Rod Pickering before Terry Highton brilliantly took Shirley Pickering to deuce. Still 22 needed for KP to win.

Smith needed all her skill to beat Martin Taylor 21-9 leaving KP's Rayan Kotecha requiring to beat the wily Chris Weston 21-8. The latter scored 10 to give The Drifters victory by two points at 335-333.

Alec Downes is a player well suited to this format and he helped KP Nutters to a 285-262 victory over The Regents with a plus return of 20 points, Robert Geary offering excellent support with plus-27 himself.

KP Young Ones had Zia Malik in very good form with a plus 31 return against Casualties in leading his side to a 307-271 success. Jason Woodfield, a Division One player, battled for Casualties with plus 30 but the Young Ones had Brajesh Patel, Vishaal Sharda and Abe Lam all in good form.

The fourth result was a very good 324-273 victory for Ian's Wizards, largely playing out of Division Five and in this for the first time. Their win over KP Might Be Academics probably puts them as favourites at this stage with improving players, notably Dan Andrews.

In the League Cups the closest result so far came in one for the lowest gradings, below 115, the Lillian Williamson Trophy, when Knighton Park A just got the better of Abbots Road B by 5-4, mainly thanks to an excellent maximum by Alec Downes, with support from Bill Walmsley and Paul Ducksbury each taking one. For Abbots, Bradley Lapworth and Ketan Patel each won two.

At the top of the tree in the open Rose Johnson Cup there were no surprises when the Knighton Park first team beat their seconds 5-1 with Jack Rogers beating Karen Smith for the seconds, while Chris Rogers and Reza Kiani both emerged undefeated. Electricity beat Syston Casuals 5-1 when Andy LeButt and David Grundy each won two from two, Chris Brewer one from two. Jason Woodfield the Syston success.

There were two 5-1 results in the Corral Cup for those graded below 210 when Syston Casuals defeated Electricity, Ian Wetherly and John Szostak undefeated, while Knighton Park beat Abbots Road who could only muster two players. The KP team were Steve Bessant, Zia Malik and Mike Lapworth.

5-1 was a popular result with another one popping up in the Saracen Cup (gradings below 170) when Electricity defeated Abbots Road, Sheriff Makhani and Andy Searle two from two. Meanwhile Great Glen only had two players against Knighton Park for whom Shirley Pickering, Rod Pickering and Brajesh Patel were in unforgiving mood, winning 9-0.

Not many league matches were pulled in but what was lacking in quantity was certainly made up for in significance.

In Division Five the top of the table was completely changed with the defeat of top team, hitherto undefeated Syston Casuals V, by the third-placed team, Abbot Road IV, the 6-4 result means that Abbots leapfrog their rivals.

The success was largely a result of a brilliant maximum by young Bradley Lapworth who currently has an official grading of 73. He beat Tony Monteiro (116), Tony Burns (110) and Nick Bishop (106), underscoring his improved recent form. For Abbots Ketan Patel won two and Dave Rana one, the Syston trio all taking one.

This sits Fleckney firsts firmly at the top with 58 points from 16 matches. Abbots are next with 55 from 16, Syston 53 from 15 and Blaby and Whetstone III 49 from 16, the latter kicking themselves for losing to Winstanley Wizards V the week before.

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