



St Neots and PPong take top VBL spots

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Briar St Neots Saints men and PPong ladies won the top divisions at the Veterans' British League finale.

But there were contrasting margins of victory as unbeaten Saints stretched clear of their rivals, while PPong edged home by a point in a division in which any of the top four retained a chance until deep into the competition.

St Neots went into the second weekend with a lead of two points over Butterfly-Eck and they quickly laid down a marker with 6-0 victories in their first two matches.

Butterfly-Eck fell away, not managing to pick up a win all weekend, leaving XLNT Draycott and PPong Vets chasing the leaders.

But St Neots beat the former 5-1 in Round 8, which meant they could not be caught. PPong managed a 3-3 draw with St Neots, Simon Pugh beating Ian Musk to level it up in the final match, which was effectively enough to clinch the runners-up spot, five points behind the winners. At the bottom, The Rams were adrift on two points.



PPong Ladies

In the women's Premier, Bribar Failand led going into Weekend 2 but fell away to finish fourth. With Failand, Bribar Knighton Park, PPong and Market Rasen taking points off each other, it all came down to the final round, when PPong won 6-0 against Failand, while the other two contenders drew 3-3 with each other.

It left PPong on 14 points, Market Rasen on 13, Knighton Park on 12 and Failand on 11. At the bottom were Wheelers Fusion of Ladies on three points.

In the other men's divisions, there was a hat-trick for Foresters, led by their A team taking Division 1A on 15 points. The division was dominated by drawn matches – so much so that bottom-placed Moberley failed to win, but only lost two of their 10 matches, and only two points separated them from second place.

There was a gulf in class in Division 1B as The Musketeers won all 10 matches to finish seven points clear at the top. They only dropped eight matches all tournament, and only two on the second weekend – Mark Romano of XLNT Draycott II and Richard Jermyn of Football Wise picking up victories against Ivan Lewis and Stephen Horton respectively.

Foresters B matched their club-mates' feat in the higher division as they won 2A by a couple of points from Redland Bats, though they did lose to their nearest rivals. In 2B, Westfield Nomads held off Archway Peterborough, a 6-0 win when they met in the penultimate round proving crucial.

And it was a Foresters hat-trick as the C team won Division 3A by a point from XLNT Draycott III. Unbeaten St Georges took 3B by three points from South Essex.

Graham Spicer II and Blackpool won 4A and 4B respectively, though the latter held off Bristol Associates on sets difference.

Women's Division 1 was won by Fusion Ladies B, despite them sitting in third place prior to the divisional split after seven matches. Lyncrest, who had led, managed just one draw from their last three matches. Ips Tigers

prevailed in Division 2, ahead of Northern Belles.

St Neots' Jason Ramage headed the averages in the Premier (excepting club-mate Andy Trott who won two out of two), winning 16 of his 18 matches for an 88.89% win-rate.

But for sustained excellence, Mike O'Driscoll takes the prize, winning all 18 of his matches for The Musketeers in Division 1B. Team-mates Darren Lindley and Ivan Lewis were also at 90% or more, while Richard Lightowler of Seaside's average 92.86%, all three playing at least 10 matches across the season.

Darren McVitie of Foresters C won all 10 of his matches in Division 3A, while Ryan Stockham just missed out on a perfect record in 3B, claiming 19/20 for St Georges.

Sanja Clements, an ever-present for Five Counties, topped the Premier averages with 18/20, a rate matched by Fusion Ladies B's Michelle McGovern in Division 1, who then went on to win all six of her matches after the split into 1A and 1B.

Division 2 saw Carrie Cope of Billwood boast a perfect record from 16 matches – she also won all four after the divisional split.

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