



Week commencing 4th May 2009

The last matches of the Leamington & District Table Tennis Association league season have now been played, with the title winners, promotion places and relegations all decided.

In Division 1, Colebridge Aces wrapped up their second successive crown, finishing twenty points clear of their nearest rivals. Their top spot was set up with two wins over potentially tricky opponents. First, in what was a tighter match than the score suggests, they beat WCC Antelopes 8-2. Ian Ferguson and Sasha Grokhotov both took three, with Edward Lynn adding a brace. Keith Fellows saved a single for Council, then added the doubles with Simon Griew. That result left 'Bridge needing five points from their remaining games and they did that at the first attempt with a 7-3 win over two-man Free Church A. Ferguson won both his singles, with Grokhotov and Lynn adding one each. Jon Hall won two for Church, then took the doubles with Ron Vose.

Only being able to field two players meant the Free Church A handed the initiative to St Georges B in the battle for second place. A strong finish in their last two games from Saints secured the runners up spot. Mark Jackson, Tristan Gretton and Damien Fenton beat two-man Rugby A 9-1; Jack Randle's win over Fenton the only point Rugby could muster. The Saints trio then faced St Georges C and overwhelmed them 10-0 with the loss of only two ends.

At the foot of the table, Saints were already confirmed as relegated along with Free Church B. Their slim chance of finishing second from bottom was washed away with that 10-0 defeat, plus a 9-1 reverse against WCC Antelopes. Against the Antelopes, Len Coonan won a creditable single. Free Church B's campaign ended with a 10-0 drubbing by champions, Colebridge Aces, and a 9-1 defeat to St Georges A.

In the individual averages, Ian Ferguson of Colebridge wins the award for the second year running. Although he tasted defeat three times this season, he was still ahead of the rest as he won 54/57 (95%). Mark Jackson (St Georges) was second with 51/61 (84%) and Edward Lynn (Colebridge) was third with 48/60 (80%).

Division 2 was won by Colebridge Braves, who were almost as emphatic winners as their A side. The Braves took the title with 169 points, nineteen clear of their nearest challengers. Those challengers were Rugby B, who made a strong late surge but still fell well short.

Rugby racked up three 8-2 wins in the closing stages of the season. Alan Chan, Ladislav Grezdo and Jack Koumi twice beat two-man Flavels, with two from both Alan and Ladislav, plus the doubles together. They finished off with an 8-2 win over Whitnash B thanks to three from Thomas Jacko, two from Alan Chan, two from Ryan Lines and the doubles. Paul Ryman wrapped up a solid season with both 'Nash points.

Down in the relegation area, it was the two Nomads sides who couldn't drag themselves out in the second half of the season. Nomads A, with a game left, were facing the ignominy of finishing below their B side, but they came through 7-3 against Flavels thanks to Tony Thomas and Andy Davies who won two and one respectively, plus the doubles, to add to three forfeited points from two-man Flavels, which left them second-bottom.

Colebridge Braves' Chris Burgess was an immaculate individual averages winner with 51/51. His colleague, John Taylor, was second with 37/45 (82%) and Thomas Jacko (Rugby) was third with 41/51 (80%).

Another title won early on and in Division 3 it was eventually won by a mammoth twenty-eight points! St Georges E finished off their season with an 8-2 win over Eathorpe A and a 10-0 win over Snitterfield A. Laurence Sweeney and Kevin Finn won three each against 'Thorpe, with Charlotte Spencer adding a brace. Alastair Nicholson won a single in reply, plus the doubles with Peter Titmas.

Rugby E finished their much improved second half of the season with a couple of big wins which secured them second place and promotion by eleven points from Eathorpe A. Rugby beat Free Church D 9-1 with maximums from Dave Gillibrand and Tom Orr, two from Don Pritchard and the doubles from Dave and Tom. Reserve, Luke Spencer took the consolation point for Church. Dave and Don were joined by Pete Morris against Rugby F and all three posted hat-tricks. The F side's only joy came in the doubles when Ryan Lines and Jack Koumi battled to a five-set victory.

WCC Doves finished the season second bottom and will be relegated along with Rugby D. Rugby D finished their season with a 9-1 defeat by Free Church D. Peter Moffatt took a single for Rugby to ensure they didn't finish with a whitewash.

Unsurprisingly, it was St Georges E players who topped the averages. Laurence Sweeney was first with 46/50 (92%) from Kevin Finn on 48/53 (91%). Dave Gillibrand of Rugby snuck into the top three with 33/38 (87%).

Nomads C had dragged themselves into first place in Division 4 over the final few weeks of the season, but with their matches completed, Free Church F knew they would take the title race with twelve points from their last two matches.

Church powered to a 9-1 win over Ashorne thanks to three from Scott Delday, three from Luke Spencer, two from Barry Hobbins and the doubles from Scott and Barry. Roger Kelley consoled for Ashorne. That meant that only three points were required against Eathorpe B and with glory in their sights, the Church trio made no mistake, ruthlessly dispatching Eathorpe 10-0.

At the foot of the table, an excellent late showing from Potters Green A dragged them back from afar. Their last match was a 6-4 loss to Ashorne, but it left them bottom by only a single point and will give them hope for an improved showing next season.

Luke Spencer (Free Church) won the individual averages with 46/48 (96%), from Barry Hobbins (Free Church) 30/39 (77%) and William Hancock (Eathorpe) 34/45 (76%).

Unfortunately for the sport, the top spots in Division A were effectively settled in the committee room due to the inability to persuade the fixture programme to be completed on the table. A 4-0 award in favour of Free Church H against Eathorpe D meant that they finished a point behind winners, St Georges F. Saints have once again proved to be a class act in Division A and are deserved winners once more.

The four points awarded to Church draws them level with Nomads D and will see the two play off for second place as soon as it can be arranged. Although Church have drawn level with awarded points, it was felt by the committee that those points were the most they could reasonably have expected to get against Eathorpe D and that a playoff was the fairest way to settle second place, if certainly not ideal.

The relegation places were filled by Eathorpe E in tenth and Free Church I in eleventh. Both sides showed improvement towards the end of the season, but both will be facing life in Division B next year.

Luke Hobbins (Free Church) topped the individual averages with a one hundred per cent 16/16. Allan Stockham was second with 12/14 (86%) and Claire Cram (Free Church) third with 11/16 (69%).

Rugby J required ten points from ten in their last two matches to take the Division B title and that is exactly what they got! Ming Chen Chai and Hiten Shah produced two outstanding performances to beat Eathorpe I and Eathorpe H 5-0, taking the title from Free Church H by a solitary point.

Eathorpe I's defeat condemned them to the bottom place in the Division, with Eathorpe H tied with Free Church L for second-bottom.

Jack Hobbins (Free Church) topped the averages with 17/18 (94%), from Richard Freeman (Eathorpe) 15/18 (83%) and Majinder Dosanjh (Rugby) 12/16 (75%).

Going into the last matches, the Division C title was St Georges G's to lose, holding a two point advantage over challengers, LCP Packers. As it was, both sides finished with 5-0 wins. Saints duo, Tom and Sam Poland beat Free Church O; Packers pair, Simon Walmesley and Doug Smith beat Snitterfield D.

At the foot of the table, Free Church T finished adrift in eleventh place, with Free Church Q tenth, only a point behind club-mates Church R.

Eathorpe's Graham Rose remained unbeaten with 16/16 to take the averages, with Doug Smith (LCP Packers) 12/14 (86%) in second and Tom and Sam Poland joint third with 17/20 (85%).

Three cup competitions were also run during the course of the season and thanks is due to Ian Stevens, Competitions Secretary, for ensuring they ran smoothly and to time. All competitions were played with a "blind" handicap, where all games in a match were played out on the night, each consisting of four sets which were also all played. At the end of the match, all points scored by each side were added up, before a handicap figure was calculated based upon the league ratings of the players involved and applied to find the winner.

The Southwell Trophy was competed for by teams in Divisions A, B and C and the final was contested by Eathorpe D and Eathorpe F. At the end of the match, Eathorpe D led by 172 points to 110 and with Eathorpe F only being awarded a handicap of +8, the D side ran out winners by 54 points 172-118.

The Coronation Cup final was between Eathorpe C and Ashorne. Eathorpe finished the match with a 344-299 advantage over Ashorne and after the handicap (+4 to Ashorne) was applied, remained ahead and won the match by 41 points (344-303).

The inaugural John Earles Cup, named so in recognition of our outgoing League President's sterling service both in his presidential role and to the League in general, was between St Georges A and Free Church B. Saints led the match 374-208 at the end of play, but Free Church were awarded a +222 handicap to win the match by 56 points (430-374).

All trophies for the league season and cups will be presented at the annual Presentation Evening, along with the perpetual trophies from the individual championships which were held at the end of March. Admission to the event, to be held on Friday 8 May at St Patricks Club, Leamington is by ticket only and those attending should aim to arrive for a 7.30pm start.