



# Week commencing 10 May 2010

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**A**nd so it is, that another season of table tennis in the Leamington & District Association comes to an end, with some titles decided at a canter and some fought out until the bitter end; some relegations seeming a certainty from the off and others anybody's guess.

In Division 1, at the start of the season there was uncertainty as to whether Colebridge Aces, now devoid of the youngest member of their previous double-winning triumvirate, could make it three in a row, with Free Church A anticipated to be hot on their heels. As it turned out, the premiere title was not one of the tightest contests after all as the Aces romped to an impressive return of 187 points, 33 clear of Free Church A in second on 154.



Colebridge Aces: Ian Ferguson, Sarra Wang, Mike Browne, Edward Lynn

For Free Church to have any chance of reeling Colebridge in, they needed a stunning end to the season and the faint hope faded with a draw against St Georges A, a 7-3 defeat to Rugby A and 6-4 defeat against the Aces themselves.

The Aces finally brought the curtain down on their season in style, defeating St Georges A 10-0, who finished in third place. "Super Vet", Michael Browne, stepped in for Sarra Wang during the latter part of the season and proved a crucial member of the squad. The ever present duo of Ian Ferguson and Ed Lynn provided stability and high-level consistency. Ed has risen in the rankings to now be challenging for a top three place, whilst Ian has again captured the individual averages title with an impressive 95%. His closest challenger? Ed, with 87%.

The relegation places were effectively decided some time ago, with Colebridge Braves and Rugby B finding the going tough in an exceptionally competitive division.

**D**ivision 2 was another runaway success for its champions. St Georges D tasted defeat only once over the course of the campaign and were deserved winners from stable-mates, St Georges C, by eighteen points.

The Saints D squad of Kevin Finn, Laurence Sweeney, Charlotte Spencer and the reconstructed Pete Dasher showed ruthless efficiency throughout the season, making an excellent start and continuing throughout. Their season drew to a close with a fittingly strong performance as Kevin, Laurence and Charlotte destroyed Flavels 9-1. Flavels only consolation was a good win over Kevin by Mick Bennett.

For the youngsters, Laurence and Charlotte, the strengthening of the squad by the recruitment of Pete and Kevin has given them promotion to the first division at the first time of asking, having finished the previous season at the summit of Division 3. Two promotion-winning championships in two seasons – a fitting reward for the practice they put in. Laurence also has the honour of winning two successive averages prizes, finishing a season of rapid improvement on a mighty 95%, tasting defeat only twice.

At the foot of the table, the 9-1 defeat took away any chance of Flavels finishing off the bottom and their 51 points sees them relegated along with WCC Crocs who too often showed little bite, finishing with 54 points.

**I**f the first two divisions' titles were won comfortably, Division 3 was certainly the polar opposite! For a long time throughout the season three sides, Nomads B, Free Church E and Eathorpe A were streets ahead of anyone else and with all three consistently pulling out performances it seemed like one of the three would suffer the cruel disappointment of missing out on promotion.

It was Nomads B who first showed the signs of slipping and by the time they played Eathorpe A, they knew that only a big win would give them a chance. They were unable to produce, falling 7-3 and leaving Dick Smith, Dave Harding, Steve Poole and Ian Stevens marooned in third place.

That left just the two sides in it and it was Eathorpe A who held the advantage in the race for the title going into the last few weeks. Free Church E, though, had other ideas and in spite of losing Barry Hobbins to injury during the run in, a succession of big wins and, crucially, a 7-3 win over Eathorpe A themselves, pushed them to the top of the pile. Against Eathorpe, Michael Ho looked classy as he romped to a maximum, with Tom Hunt and Anthony Smith adding two each. Murray Stevenson and Peter Titmas picked up one each plus the doubles.

Eathorpe A had ground to make up and set about racking up the points as they clawed back the lead. The defining match was against Free Church C who could do their E side a huge favour by taking points. Eathorpe, though, were highly motivated and although Cherry Matthews collected a single, Chris Atkins, Murray Stevenson and Peter Titmas romped to a 9-1 victory.

Those points left Eathorpe A ten points behind, with one game to play. Unfortunately for Free Church, that last game was against rock-bottom St Georges F. The lads from St Georges F had found themselves unexpectedly thrown into Division 3 and understandably have struggled to make an impact, although they deserve great credit for the improvement they have shown throughout – they are certainly far better players for their experience. Eathorpe A completed their 10-0 victory with little drama and finished top of the tree in the tightest title race this season on 153 points, a mere point ahead of Free Church E on 152.

It may be little consolation for missing out on the title, but Free Church's Michael Ho can be proud of his 92% average over the season which sees him collect the individual award.

**D**ivision 4 was a title that looked as though Eathorpe D probably would win it, although Ashorne were always just about hanging in there with a string of good results giving them a very realistic chance.

Key for Ashorne proved to be a 5-5 draw with Potters Green A and another draw with Eathorpe B. Although they rallied with an 8-2 win against Free Church F, the title looked unlikely.

Eathorpe D, meanwhile, overcame the tricky prospect of Potters Green A and grabbed a 6-4 win in which Allan Stockham won a crucial hat-trick. Mark Sandford and Duncan Hall both won twice for Potters, but singles from Holly and Simon Thompson, plus the doubles from Holly and Allan gave Eathorpe the win.

Eathorpe also defeated WCC Flounders 7-3 and, when they pulled off the same score-line against Ashorne, any remaining doubt over the title vanished. Eathorpe D finished top on 134 points, from Ashorne's 123.

Potters Green star, Mark Sandford, was the winner of the individual averages, just missing out on a perfect record but still finishing with forty-one wins from forty-two games.

**M**oving on to the two-a-side competitions and Division A had a clear winner, with Nomads D only dropping six points over the season. Nomads brought the curtain down on their season with two wins over Whitnash C. Andy Davies and Dick Smith rolled over Jayne Fitton and Mark Bradley 5-0, but the Whitnash pair managed to pick up a couple of points against Dick Smith and Richard Miles in the return, leaving Nomads as 3-2 winners on that occasion.

Nomads 34 points from a possible 40 left them ten ahead of closest rivals, Rugby H, with Free Church J finishing bottom of the pile with 11 points, two behind Rugby J.

Martyn Lilley of Rugby H was the averages winner with an unbeaten 16/16 record.

**F**ree Church H, Free Church I and Eathorpe E were the three sides contending the Division B title. Eathorpe E finished third with 28 points, only one behind Church I and Free Church H topped the table with 32 points.

Free Church N and Free Church K were the bottom two sides and will be relegated.

Ryan Oldham (Eathorpe E) capped a fine season by winning the individual averages with a 95% record which included only one defeat.

**P**otters Green B were always likely to finish top of Division C and finished off their season with a 3-2 win over Free Church Q. Harry Ellis won his two and Aaron Riley added a single to win the match. Troy Pierce grabbed a single for Church and took the doubles with Kris Reiman.

Eathorpe F always looked likely to finish second. Never troubled by those below them and never really looking like catching Potter Green. Their 30 points were a decent haul, but still left them seven shy of Potters.

Eathorpe G and Free Church M were the relegated sides and will compete in Division D in September.

Harry Ellis did get some glory for Potters Green, with the individual averages prize. With the two players above him not playing enough matches to qualify, Harry's 11/14 79% was good enough.

**E**athorpe I were seven points clear of their closest challengers at the end of the Division D season. Will Bourner and Sam Rose trounced Free Church R 5-0, before seeing off second place Eathorpe H 4-1.

Eathorpe H were pushed for second place by Free Church P, but they finished the season well to end two points clear of them and earn promotion.

Free Church O and Free Church R will be relegated to Division E. Free Church R were well adrift with only nine points, but Church O only missed out on survival by a mere point – Snitterfield D accumulating twenty-two to their twenty-one.

Will Bourner ended a great year which has seen him excel in both Division E before Christmas and Division D after by scooping the individual award with a 90% average.

**H**arry Keen and Paul Watkins of Free Church S have had a good second half of the year. In another example of younger players progressing through hard work on the practice table, they finished as champions of Division E on 41 points, just one ahead of Free Church U who pushed them all the way.

Free Church U missed out on the title, but hold the player with the best individual averages. The impressive Theo Rutter slipped up only once over the season to top the pile with an average of 95%.

**A** reminder that the annual presentation evening is on Friday 21 May (not as stated in the handbook) at Old Leamingtonians RFC, The Crofts, Bericote Road, Leamington Spa CV32 6QP from 7.30pm to 11pm. There will be a hog roast and a quiz. Trophies will be awarded to the winners and runners up in each division and to the winners of the Leamington Closed events.

Cost is £12 or £10 for juniors. Members and their families and friends are all welcome.

If you haven't got your tickets already, please contact Claire Cram 07920 066873 or Caroline Williams 01926 772067.

Finally, please note that the Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010 at Kenilworth Wardens Cricket Club, commencing at 7.30pm.