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table tennis

All three of last season's title challengers have undergone changes as the Braintree Table Tennis League opens this week.

But it is champions Bocking who look the most stable.

They have lost Paul Davison but have an almost like-for-like replacement in Gary Young, who moves across from Black Notley to join fellow Ipswichian Nigel Hodder and Kevin Gowlett to form a strong three-pronged attack.

As last year, Richard Jennings, David Edwards and Garry Fryatt will also be on hand but there is no reason why they cannot shuffle their hand as they did before to retain their title.

Young is not the only Notley player to leave the club. Steve Kerns, Ian Brown and Ken Lewis are also missing with only Graham Farmer left from last year's second-placed team.

He will line up in this year's B team, alongside James Hicks, Laurie Sapiano, Rob Stannard and the returning Bryan Speller, while the A team berth is taken up by the former Cressing team, who move en bloc after a price rise at their old home.

Their title challenge fell away last year when injury cost them the services of Peter Hayden and they will have to start this season without him as well as he recovers from both knee and arm injuries.

Ian Hayden, Terry Dowsett, Trevor Carter and Scott Dowsett will hold the team together in the meantime.

Davison will once again be turning out for Netts A, who return to the league after a six-year absence.

He and his partner Nikki Kennard, ranked 62 in England, will be backed by the also returning Larte Lawson and son Philip, the new Essex cadets champion.

It is a team with clear championship potential but all its members have multiple commitments and availability could be a problem.

Below them Rayne A, Liberal A and Rayne B are unchanged while the division is made up with two promoted teams, Pillar House A (last year's Cressing B) and Rayne C, last year's D team.

That means a welcome first crack at the top division for Sean Clift and a return there for old hands Duncan Elloy, Dave Punt and Keith Martin.

A preview of divisions two and three will follow next week.