

The structure of this year's Braintree Table Tennis League has meant a scramble for places in the top six where four teams are currently fighting for two places.

The league splits after teams have played each other twice with the top six contesting the league championship while the remaining three teams play off against the top four teams in division two for the next set of places.

Bocking, Netts A, Black Notley A and Rayne A are all well clear of any such concerns while Rayne C have virtually booked their place in the lower section.

That has left Rayne B, Notley B, Pillar House A and Liberal A vying for the final two places in the upper stratum.

And it was Rayne B who pulled ahead of the rest last week when they took eight points off their own C team.

Brian Riedling and Peter Hance were unbeaten while Keith Martin's win over Paul Mitchell was the only singles to get away.

Neither Liberal A nor Notley B fared so well. Both were playing a team from the upper echelon and were at the wrong end of an 8-2 scoreline.

Liberal were at Rayne A where Steve Elmes was making his first appearance of the season. He and Ian Whiteside won their three singles.

Notley B entertained Bocking where Kevin Gowlett and Gary Young were unbeaten. And for Gowlett that meant revenge over James Hicks for his only defeat this season.

There was revenge of sorts too for Rayne D in division two. They were held to a draw in their first meeting with Nomads, but in their second encounter they sneaked home 6-4.

If Cec Butcher had not just crept over the line 12-10 in the fifth end against Arthur Wilson, the match would have finished all square again.

Rayne will point out, however, that they were not the only ones to win a tight set. Kevin Saunders, who won his three singles for Nomads, had two close five-game wins of his own, 11-9 against Butcher and 12-10 over Paul Wellington.

Black Notley F started the evening well against White Lions A in division three when Alan Cook beat Steve Willis in three straight games. It was downhill from

there, however, as Lions took the remaining nine sets with three each from Clare Johnson and Adam Purslow.

Andy Thompson almost got there. He lost by two points in the fifth game to both Willis and Johnson.