

Looking good at Christmas, Bocking have stumbled unconvincingly into the new year in the Braintree Table Tennis League.

Having won their first nine matches, the league champions suffered their first defeat against a full-strength Netts A and then struggled to a draw with bottom team Rayne C who had lost all their previous 12 matches.

Kevin Gowlett, with only one defeat behind him, fell to men's singles champion Paul Davison and more surprisingly also to Nikki Kennard.

Gary Young, in only his third appearance of the season, also found Davison too much for him – by a convincing 11-7, 11-8, 12-10 – although he was able to get the better of Kennard and Kelly Skeggs.

Skeggs's defeat of Richard Jennings racked up six wins for the visitors.

Without Young, Jennings or Nigel Hodder, Bocking's encounter with Rayne C always had the potential to be a difficult one, and so it proved. Gowlett won his three singles and took the doubles with David Edwards, whose win over Dave Punt earned them a share of the points.

Keith Martin and Dave Moles won two each for Rayne.

The encouraging news for Bocking is that their rivals for the title are also dropping points. Black Notley A conceded three sets when they could only field two players against their own B team while Netts dropped four points at Pillar House A and three against Rayne C.

Rayne C were less successful against Liberal A who took all ten sets, but only after a struggle. They won two sets at deuce in the fifth game and Mike Johnston's win over Keith Martin came only after he lost the first two games and was taken to 15-13 in the third.