

With a stunning display of power, speed and accuracy, Paul Davison scored his third successive men's singles win in the Braintree Table Tennis League individual championships on Thursday.

Neither Kevin Gowlett in the semi final nor Peter Hayden in the final found the form of which they are capable, but that is partly because Davison did not let them.

He launched strong attacks on both wings that left his more static opponents standing.

Gowlett, who had beaten Davison in the league only a few weeks earlier, never got going. Very little he tried came off and his all-action opponent surged through 11-6, 11-7, 11-6.

In the final, Hayden, who also beat Davison recently, tried to equalise the speed of movement on the other side of the net with his own speed of thought and reaction. But he found Davison matching him in those departments too.

After a brief lapse in the third game, when he let a lead slip away, Davison refocused and stormed through the fourth 11-5 to become only the fifth person to win the title three years in a row.

He also added the men's doubles title, as last year, when he teamed up with Gowlett to overcome Peter and Ian Hayden.

He was again the dominant force in the only set of the evening that went the full five games.

Gowlett showed glimpses of his real self in this match and he and Davison looked comfortable as they won the first game 11-4. When they pulled back a deficit in the second game to win at 11-8, it looked all over, but the Haydens began to find their touch and took the next two games to level.

That was as far as they got, however, as the holders opened with renewed determination in the fifth end and took it comfortably at 11-5.

The writing was on the wall for Peter Hayden in his earlier appearances when he did not appear his usual fluent self in either his semi final against Ian Whiteside (11-9, 11-8, 11-5) or in the veterans' singles final against James Hicks.

Hicks, in his first finals night appearance, zipped around the table in an attempt to get his attack in first and after a slow start gave the No.1 seed much to think about.

He took the second game and came close to stretching it to five but a relieved Hayden just held on to win the fourth at 12-10.

Hicks did not go home empty handed. He brought his current league form (a 75 per cent average compared with 52 last season) into the division one singles final against Ryan Pitt, another player with a good record in his first season in division one.

In an entertaining and open game, with both players exhibiting power and control on the backhand, Pitt hit back after losing the opening game to win the second 11-5. Had he gone on to win the third it may have been a different story, but Hicks held on to take that at 11-9 and eased home 11-5 in the fourth.

The division two singles final represented success for patience and steadiness over youthful exuberance.

Graham Cannon, whose finals night debut last season ended in defeat at 11-9 in the fifth, gained solace with a victory over 18-year-old Adam Pitt.

Pitt relies on a sharp flat hit to win most of his points but frequently chose the wrong one to hit and Cannon's refusal to be ruffled stood him in good stead for a comfortable win.

Adam Clift was making his first appearance on finals night and stretched Stuart Ascott in the division three singles but fell tantalisingly short.

Ascott is another player who likes to thump the ball hard whereas Clift, who beat him recently in the league, is more circumspect and willing to mix it a little.

After losing the first, he took the next two to deuce but Ascott was not to be denied and held on to win 11-5, 13-11, 13-11.

It was Roy Hooper who recorded that 11-9-in-the-fifth win over Cannon last year and he was back to take a second trophy this season when he overcame Kevin Saunders to win the restricted singles.

Saunders, making his first finals night appearance more than 30 years after his debut in the league, had beaten Hooper twice in the league but he was another one to find that playing on finals night is an entirely different experience.

He seldom displayed the attacking part of his game and it was the more adventurous Hooper who held sway. He attacked early with a strong, if slightly unorthodox topspin that often flatfooted his opponent.

The evening opened with two of the league's promising young talents, Warren Baines and Oliver Hicks in the cadets' singles final.

Fourteen-year-old Baines had earned a psychological advantage on his opponent with wins over him in the junior boys' singles and handicap singles the previous weekend and he illustrated that confidence in a mature display in which he refused to be ruffled by Hicks's heavy forehands.

He was comfortable playing back from the table and showed a calmness in adversity often missing in players of his age.

Hicks was always in the hunt, missing out at deuce in both the first two games and taking the third, but he was not able to string together a long enough winning streak and it was the older player who took the prize.

And finally one curio: All ten events were won by the player or players whose name came first in the alphabet, a 1,023-1 chance.

Umpires were Arthur Clark and Graham Farmer.

Results:

Men's singles final: Paul Davison beat Peter Hayden 11-9, 11-4, 7-11, 11-5.

Semi finals: Davison beat Kevin Gowlett 11-6, 11-7, 11-6;
Hayden beat Ian Whiteside 11-9, 11-8, 11-5.

Men's doubles: Davison and Gowlett beat Ian and Peter Hayden 11-4, 11-8, 9-11, 8-11, 11-5.

Veterans' singles: Peter Hayden beat James Hicks 11-3, 10-12, 11-7, 12-10.

Cadets' singles: Warren Baines beat Oliver Hicks 13-11, 15-13, 4-11, 11-6.

Restricted singles: Roy Hooper beat Kevin Saunders 11-4, 14-12, 6-11, 11-3.

Division one singles: James Hicks beat Ryan Pitt 11-8, 5-11, 11-9, 11-5.

Division two singles: Graham Cannon beat Adam Pitt 11-5, 11-2, 11-5.

Division three singles: Stuart Ascott beat Adam Clift 11-5, 13-11, 13-11.