

Champions Bocking's lead at the top of the Braintree Table Tennis League, down to four points at the beginning of the league's final phase, has dwindled even further.

Black Notley A's 9-1 win over Liberal A, coupled with Bocking's three dropped points against Notley's B team, means the gap is now down to two points as the two teams prepare to go head to head next week.

There are no easy matches in the final run-in as the top six peel off to play each other for a final time. Although Liberal A and Notley B are at the opposite end of the top six, they still presented a challenge to the top two.

Liberal's Barry Pritchard scored his side's point with a win over Trevor Carter, and he came mightily close to getting a second against Ian Hayden, but the Notley player just held on at 11-9 in the final game.

Kevin Gowlett and Nigel Hodder remained unbeaten for Bocking but all three Notley B players overcame Garry Fryatt even though, in Laurie Sapiano's case, success did not arrive until 11-9 in the fifth.

Netts A and Rayne A ended the first part of the season equal on points in third place but Netts pulled ahead when they faced each other in the first match of the new section.

Nikki Kennard and Paul Davison remained unbeaten in their 7-3 win.

They dropped three points against Liberal A in their next game, however, while Rayne won 8-2 against the same opponents the following day.

The first week of matches in play-off group 1 enabled two teams from the first division to put two second division teams in their place.

Rayne B beat Sible Hedingham 10-0 while Pillar House A's four points dropped against Rayne D included three sets conceded plus a failure in the doubles. Duncan Elloy and Chris Ciniglio were untroubled.

The new division two champions Rayne E carried on where they left off with an 8-2 win over Liberal B in which Richard Whiteside was unbeaten.

Play-off group two features five teams from division two and the top two from division three and the two former division three teams came up against each other in the first week.

Divisional champions White Lions A (formerly B) stormed to an 8-2 win, despite being 2-1 down. Stuart Ascott was unbeaten.

Luke Tarrant was unbeaten as Netts B beat Rayne F 7-3 and Lyndon Griffiths' record was similarly unsullied in Notley C's win by the same score against Nomads.

In the consolation trophy, White Lions B (formerly A), who only narrowly missed out on promotion, started with a 7-3 win over Notley F. Alan Cook won twice for Notley but he was unable to overcome former clubmate Adam Purslow.

A two-man Notley E won all they could against their own G team while Rayne G dealt comfortably with their own H team. Charles Wilkinson won his three singles in the 7-3 victory.