

A series of tight results in the Braintree Table Tennis League has left the final placings in the play-off groups very much in doubt.

Particularly close is the position at the foot of play-off group 2 where the top five will play in division two next year and the remaining two in division three.

Black Notley C and Nomads are ensconced safely at the top while Pillar House B are detached at the bottom. But none of the other four want to join them. All are bunched in a heap behind the top two.

Two of them, Rayne F and White Lions A, drew with each other, while Netts B picked up a useful three points from Notley C and Notley D grabbed four points from Nomads.

Stuart Ascott took his three singles for Lions while Patrick Gilbert, in the shadow of his teammates at Netts B so far, was the only one to get the better of Notley C's Lyndon Griffiths.

Ben Page beat Tim Huxtable and the two of them took the doubles, but no one could deal with Gordon Fairchild.

Notley D's Bruce Wickham had a good win over Barrie Applegate then scored one of the wins of the season when he overcame Kevin Saunders.

In play-off group 1, the main question is who finishes third behind Rayne B and Pillar House A who already look certain to maintain their first division status.

With two matches to play, Rayne C trail their own E team by four points and could probably have done with more than six points against Liberal B whom the E team beat 8-2.

Instead they encountered a top-form Paul Lombardi who took his three singles for Liberal.

Rayne E made little progress against their B team who beat them 9-1. But they took five sets the full distance and Simon Fleming can be particularly pleased with his straight-games win over Brian Cook.

Pillar House A secured a similar scoreline against Sible Hedingham but again there were some close games and Mark Brown illustrated his continuing improvement with an excellent win over Duncan Elloy.

Rayne G kept up their quest for the consolation trophy with an 8-2 win over Notley G. Warren Baines took the two for Notley but he had the same difficulty as his teammates when it came to bettering Charles Wilkinson.

For Notley E, Baines, Simon Pohl and Ian Wallace all registered twice as they beat their own G team 7-3. Mike Pitt also took two for the losers.

In division one, Graham Farmer won his three singles, plus the doubles with Rob Stannard, but his Notley B teammates could add no more and Liberal A took away a 6-4 win.