

Handicap Cup Final Report – Ron Fosker

Rayne B ended Black Notley's three-year run of success by winning the Braintree Table Tennis League handicap cup.

But it was a tight affair, in keeping with the rest of this year's competition, which could easily have tipped the other way.

Rayne's 5-2 victory over Black Notley G included three wins at deuce in the fifth game, in all of which Notley had a match point.

So just a net or edge at the vital time and the trophy would have stayed on the Notley shelf for another year.

But Rayne deserve the plaudits for their doggedness in overcoming long handicaps of either minus 5 or 6 against plus 3 or 4 which meant that they had to score roughly double their opponents' points.

It was tough going in parts – they lost two games 11-1 and one 11-0 – but their perseverance got them there in the end.

The first set illustrated how difficult it was going to be when Willis comfortably overcame Paul Mitchell 11-3 in the fourth game.

The match then entered its vital phase as first Brian Riedling just sneaked home against Adam Purslow then Peter Hance did the same against Clare Johnson who, like Willis, was in the winning team in 2006.

Riedling was stretched to 15-13 in the fifth before claiming victory. Hance had an easier time of it – only 13-11 in the fifth.

Mitchell's four-game defeat of Purslow was followed by a second win for Willis, this time over Hance, before Riedling put things back on track with a win over Johnson.

At 4-2 there was still all to play for as Hance took on Purslow and when he lost the fourth game 11-1, things could still have swung round. But in the fifth he slowly clawed his way back and ensured the trophy was Rayne's with a win at 13-11.