

**Ron Fosker**

**02.04.06**

**table tennis**

**For the first time in 19 years, neither of the top two seeds will contest the men's singles semi finals at the Braintree Table Tennis League finals night at Black Notley Community Centre tomorrow [Thursday].**

**Peter Hayden and Paul Davison fell in the quarter finals to Ian Brown and Steve Pennell respectively.**

**Instead the final stages will be fought out between four players with just five previous semi final appearances between them.**

**The scalp of the day, that of three time champion and No.1 seed Hayden, went to 57-year-old Brown.**

**His dogged persistence wore down the former champion who was made to pay for some uncharacteristically loose shots.**

**Pennell's win over Davison was as close as they come, a nailbiting 12-10 in the fifth game in which Pennell had to come back from 7-9. It will be the Rayne A man's first semi final.**

**By contrast with their supposed betters, the two No.3 seeds did what was expected of them and reached their semi final berths, in both cases relatively comfortably.**

**Kevin Gowlett was taken to four games by Steve Mills but then beat Ken Lewis, seeded =5, 11-8, 11-3, 12-10.**

**Jon Hill is the only one of the four semi finalists who has actually played in a final, and his 21-9, 21-2 defeat by Steve Kerns in 2002 is an experience he will not want to remember too vividly.**

**He will get a chance to redeem that this year after his 11-8, 7-11, 11-8, 11-7 victory over Ian Whiteside in the last eight.**

**In the semi finals, Brown will play Gowlett and Hill faces Pennell.**

**The remaining events went pretty much according to plan although there were a number of close scrapes and good individual performances.**

**The eight men's singles seeds paired up for the men's doubles and it was Davison/Gowlett and Hayden/Hill who came through to contest tomorrow's final.**

**Davison and Gowlett almost came a cropper against the youthful pairing of Alistair Hill and Simon Webber who only succumbed at 12-10 in the fifth.**

**Hayden and Hill were taken to five before coming through their semi final against Pennell and Whiteside.**

**Hill makes his third finals night appearance in the mixed doubles where he and Vicki Stredder will face reigning champions Kelly Skeggs and Paul Davison.**

Skeggs was unable to compete in the ladies' singles which leaves a straight fight between Clare Johnson and Becki Metson. The two have already met in the ladies' restricted final where Johnson won in five games, coming back from 2-1 down.

The ladies' doubles final, played off on Sunday, resulted in a win for Skeggs and Stredder over Johnson and Metson 7-11, 12-10, 11-7, 11-7.

Jon Hill's chances of playing in four events on finals night were scuppered by Ian Brown in the veterans' singles, his Notley teammate sneaking through to the final 11-7 in the fifth.

And there Brown will renew hostilities with Peter Hayden who also came through at 11-7 in the fifth against Steve Pennell.

At the other end of the age scale, the cadets' singles will feature Christopher Bragg, who has yet to experience league table tennis, against Philip Lawson, who is already beginning to win matches in division two.

The junior boys' singles brings together Phil Hartley, last year's runner-up, and Andrew McEwan. The two came face to face in the restricted singles where McEwan had a comfortable win.

McEwan, who had already knocked out the seeded Cec Butcher, nearly brought off the shock of the restricted singles when he came desperately close to getting the better of the No.1 seed Mark Lewis, unbeaten in division two this season. McEwan was 8-4 up in the fifth and then after losing the next six points fought back to take the tie to 16-14.

A relieved Lewis will face Larte Lawson who beat Rob Stannard in four games in the semi final.

The remaining events on finals night will be the three divisional finals.

In division one, Ian Whiteside faces Simon Webber while in division three, Adam Pitt will face his Notley G teammate Tony Bamsey.

Larte Lawson will face his Colne colleague Phil Hartley in the division two final, but he came very close to facing his own son Philip who just missed out in his semi final against Hartley 11-7 in the fifth.

Some events were decided at the weekend.

In the junior doubles, Hartley and Tom Hill beat McEwan and Philip Lawson in four games.

The over 50s' singles saw a couple of surprises when Barry Pritchard scored an excellent win over Ken Lewis only to lose unexpectedly to Dave Moles. Whiteside was too good for Moles in the final.

Andrew McEwan, who had a busy tournament, demonstrated his progress during the season when he took advantage of his handicap to win both the handicap singles – beating Steve Ascott in the final – and the handicap doubles with Clare Johnson. They beat Tony Stredder and Larte Lawson in the final 11-0, 11-9, 11-7.

**Ron Fosker**

**28.4.06**

**table tennis**

**Rayne D have won division two of the Braintree Table Tennis League while Black Notley G are the new champions of division three.**

**Rayne D's success was confirmed after a 6-4 win over their nearest challengers Black Notley D.**

**Mark Lewis won his three singles for Notley but two wins each for Cec Butcher and Paul Wellington plus one from Tony Hammond saw Rayne home.**

**Black Notley G secured the title with a 7-3 win over Notley's H team, almost an anticlimax as it was the first point they had dropped in five matches. But it takes them out of reach of Panfield who are promoted in second place.**

**The dropped point was essentially the work of the H team's Bruce Wickham who scored an excellent win over new division three champion Adam Pitt.**

**The race for the second promotion place in division two looks like going to the wire. Rayne E's 8-2 win over Delphi has put them in a strong position to overtake Notley D who have held second spot all season.**

**Rayne E's fate is likely to be in the hands of their D team, their final opponents of the season.**

**Delphi's defeat means that they are relegated.**

**Notley F are already down but salvaged a point in a 7-3 defeat by Liberal B. The rarity here was that Derek Finch outscored his Liberal team mates to remain unbeaten.**

**Elsewhere in division three, Rayne F won twice, 7-3 against their own G team and 6-4 over Braintree Removals C. Geoff Long and Brian Hill won six out of six.**

**Black Notley's I and J team shared the points, only the second time the J team have avoided defeat this season. Mike Pitt was the main stumbling block.**

**The top two in division one, Black Notley A and Rayne A, had 10-0 wins against Rayne B and Removals A respectively.**

**Third-placed Bocking beat Rayne C 6-4 thanks to three wins from men's singles finalist Kevin Gowlett.**

**At the bottom, Black Notley C staved off the inevitable for another week when they beat their own B team 6-4. Andrew McEwan, playing up from the E team, won two, his first wins in division one.**

At the bottom of division 1, Rayne B's long expected relegation was confirmed after a 9-1 defeat by Removals, although they then managed a rare draw against their C team.

Dave Punt found the sort of form that has deserted him for much of the season and won his three singles. Alastair Brown almost followed suit. He won two and only lost at 11-9 in the fifth game to Paul Mitchell.

Steve Mills was another to find form. He won two singles for Black Notley C but the other eight went to Liberal A and Notley C look likely to follow Rayne B through the relegation trapdoor.

Ron Fosker

17.4.06

table tennis

Black Notley A have regained the Braintree Table Tennis League title they last won in 2000. And they did so in typical style, with wins of 9-1 and 10-0.

Rayne C were the team to pinch a set – Trevor Carter beating Ken Lewis – but three wins from Steve Kerns and Peter Hayden in that match and three each for Kerns, Jon Hill and Ian Brown against Liberal A were enough to take their points total beyond the reach of their pursuers.

They remain undefeated and have just three matches left to maintain that record.

Reigning champions Rayne A remain favourites to finish second although Bocking still have an outside chance, which they enhanced with wins of 9-1 over Notley B and 6-4 over Braintree Removals A.

The division two title race is alive and well.

Rayne D have recovered from their slight blip and have followed their four-match winless run with 18 points out of 20 to leave them comfortably in command at the top.

They beat Liberal B 9-1 and Notley F 10-0.

But Black Notley D's edge over Rayne E in second place continues to be eroded. They picked up wins of 6-4 against both Liberal A and Delphi but were held to a draw by their own E team.

Rayne E meanwhile beat Notley E 7-3 and Colne 6-4.

Delphi's point from Notley D and a draw against Liberal B gives them a fighting chance of avoiding relegation, but Removals B still have the upper hand after a 6-4 win over bottom team Notley F.

Kevin Saunders won four out of six for Delphi including the scalp of 2005 restricted singles champion Rob Stannard.

Surprise result of the week in division three was former leaders Panfield's draw with Black Notley H. Bruce Wickham inflicted a rare defeat on Danny Canning but the major upset was a defeat for Canning and Nick Readhead in the doubles, only their second reverse in 19 matches.

That leaves Notley G – 10-0 winners over both Removals C and Notley J – sitting pretty at the top and probably not even needing a point in the clash between the top two in the last week of the season.

Other results: Panfield 7 Removals C 3; Rayne G 7 Notley I 3; Notley J 3 Rayne F 7.

In the individual championships, some events were played off before finals night.

The two have already met in the ladies' restricted final where Johnson won in five games, coming back from 2-1 down.

The ladies' doubles final, played off on Sunday, resulted in a win for Kelly Skeggs and Vicki Stredder over Clare Johnson and Becki Metson 7-11, 12-10, 11-7, 11-7.

Metson and Johnson met in the ladies' restricted final which Johnson won after coming back from two games to one down.

In the junior doubles, Hartley and Tom Hill beat McEwan and Philip Lawson in four games.

The over 50s' singles saw a couple of surprises when Barry Pritchard scored an excellent win over Ken Lewis only to lose unexpectedly to Dave Moles. Whiteside was too good for Moles in the final.

Andrew McEwan, who had a busy tournament, demonstrated his progress during the season when he took advantage of his handicap to win both the handicap singles – beating Steve Ascott in the final – and the handicap doubles with Clare Johnson. They beat Tony Stredder and Larte Lawson in the final 11-0, 11-9, 11-7.

Ron Fosker

7.5.06

table tennis

After going the whole season undefeated, Braintree Table Tennis League champions Black Notley A were beaten in their last but one match.

At the other end of the league, the reverse happened. Notley J, without a win all season, scored a victory in their final match.

Notley A's defeat came at the hands of a strong Bocking side. They were without Steve Kerns and Peter Hayden but a team of Ken Lewis, Jon Hill and Graham Farmer is not a negligible one.

They could only win one set each, however, as Paul Davison took all three for Bocking, Kevin Gowlett two and Kelly Skeggs chimed in with an excellent win over Hill.

Davison and Gowlett won the doubles to make it 7-3 to Bocking.

Notley were pushed again in their final match against runners-up Rayne A. They could only muster two players but Kerns won his three singles, Lewis one and a doubles win ensured a draw.

Relegation for Notley C, on the cards for some time, was confirmed when they lost their last two matches to Braintree Removals A and Rayne C, both by 8-2.

Rayne B, relegated some weeks ago, had the satisfaction of a win in their final match, 6-4 over a two-person Bocking.

The race for promotion from division two had a disappointing denouement when Rayne D were only able to field two players to face their E team whose 6-4 win puts them up, one point ahead of Black Notley D.

Ironically, the D v E match had originally been postponed from the May Day Monday because the D team could not get a full team and did not want to be seen to be making it easy for their E team.

They did not make it easy on the night either and Richard Whiteside can be particularly pleased with wins over both Cec Butcher and Paul Wellington.

Notley D had faced a two-person team the previous evening against Liberal B and yet could only scrape home 6-4. It was not a good time for Rob Stannard and Grant Sharpe to run out of form. Both lost to Diane Garner and Derek Finch (Stannard's defeats coming at 13-11 and 11-8 in the fifth game).

In their previous matches, both Notley D and Rayne E had beaten Notley F, by 10-0 and 6-4 respectively. Rayne E had played the same three players – Whiteside, Phil Wade and Simon Fleming - all season and for the first time had to call in a reserve.

Black Notley E finished a strong fourth after wins of 7-3 over Colne and 8-2 over Removals B.

Colne also lost 6-4 to already relegated Delphi to end the season with six successive defeats.

Black Notley J's first win of the season in division three came at the expense of fourth-placed Rayne G. Three wins from Mike Smith, two from Yen Tran and one from Harold Jones saw them home 7-3.

The destination of the title had been decided by the time the top two met in their final match of the season, but Black Notley G confirmed their right to the trophy by beating runners-up Panfield 6-4.

Tony Bamsey again won his three singles for Notley but it was Steve Ascott's win over Danny Canning that effectively ensured the win.

**Ron Fosker**

**14.7.06**

**table tennis**

**Rayne E have secured the second promotion spot in division two of the Braintree Table Tennis League in a race that went to the final match.**

**Rayne had been creeping closer to Black Notley D for the last few weeks.**

**They took a step backwards when they could only beat Notley F 6-4 while their rivals beat the same team 10-0.**

**But then Notley D produced a sub-standard performance in beating a two-person Liberal B side 6-4.**

**It was not a good time for Rob Stannard and Grant Sharpe to run out of form. Both lost to Diane Garner and Derek Finch (Stannard's defeats coming at 13-11 and 11-8 in the fifth game).**

**That left Rayne E needing a draw against their own D team, who had already clinched the title.**

**Ironically, the match had been postponed from the May Day Monday because the D team could not get a full team and did not want to be seen to be making it easy for their E team.**

**In the event, the D team were only able to turn out two players on the rearranged date and the E team did just enough – a 6-4 win – to take the second promotion spot.**

**They did not make it easy on the night though and Richard Whiteside can be particularly pleased with wins over both Cec Butcher and Paul Wellington.**

**Rayne E played the same three players – Whiteside, Phil Wade and Simon Fleming - all season apart from the penultimate game against Notley F when Wade could not make it.**

**Black Notley E finished a strong fourth after wins of 7-3 over Colne and 8-2 over Removals B.**

**Colne also lost 6-4 to already relegated Delphi to end the season with six successive defeats.**

**Ron Fosker**

**21.5.06**

**table tennis**

**In a way honours could be said to be even between the top two teams in this season's Braintree Table Tennis League.**

Black Notley A took the league title for the first time since 2000 after back-to-back Rayne wins the previous two years. But Rayne snatched the team knock out cup after a superb nailbiting final.

Last season, Notley missed out to Rayne by two points, despite beating them twice. It was Rayne's consistency against the other teams that won the title.

This time it was Notley who had that extra reliability. They won their first 14 matches, dropping only one point - to Rayne – on the way.

Rayne on the other hand found life difficult against Bocking, who beat them 8-2 and shared the points on the other two occasions the teams met. They also dropped unexpected points against Liberal A, Removals A and Rayne C in their opening matches.

After ten matches, they were already 11 points behind Notley, a gulf they were never likely to make up.

Bocking were the ones to suffer this year from inadequate back-up. With Paul Davison and Kevin Gowlett in the team, they were a match for anyone. But with Davison only turning out seven times, they were never in the hunt for the title.

At the other end of the table, it was refreshing to see neither of the promoted teams in the bottom two places as has been the habit for several seasons.

Both Notley B and Braintree Removals A had signed additional players from last season. Duncan Elloy and Dave Ciniglio were crucial to Removals' survival while Adrian Pitt and Michael Rostoft added extra bite to Notley's line-up.

But it was good to see Notley's two younger players, Simon Webber, 19, and Ryan Pitt, 20, holding their own. In fact Webber did rather more than that and ended with a very healthy average of 68 per cent.

Instead it was goodbye to Notley C, despite some good individual results, particularly by Laurie Sapiano, and to Rayne B who maintained the habit of teams of that name to underperform.

Despite having entirely different line-ups, Rayne's B team have now finished below their C team for the last four years.

The final table for 2005-06 was

	DIVISION 1					
	P	W	L	F	A	P
Black Notley A	24	21	1	202	38	87
Rayne A	24	17	4	172	68	72
Bocking A	24	14	5	145	95	62
Liberal A	24	11	8	114	126	50

Rayne C	24	8	13	106	134	40
Black Notley B (1)	24	7	15	100	140	36
Removals A	24	7	14	97	143	36
Black Notley C	24	7	16	80	160	28
Rayne B	24	3	19	64	176	20

Black Notley B's total includes a point deducted for a late scorecard

Ron Fosker

28.5.06

table tennis

Division two provided the closest race in this year's Braintree Table Tennis League.

Rayne D looked uncatchable in the first half of the season and led by seven points at the halfway stage.

They then temporarily ran into the buffers. After winning 11 of their first 12 matches, they unaccountably failed to win any of the next four.

Suddenly Black Notley D were in the hunt and at the two-thirds point of the season, they led Rayne by one point.

But while Rayne D reasserted themselves by winning their next seven matches, it was Notley D who began to tread unsteadily.

After 16 matches, Rayne E were eight points behind Notley D but spent the rest of the season gradually overhauling them, eventually clinching the runners-up spot by one point in the final match of the season.

Notley D's fate was effectively sealed when they lost 9-1 in their third meeting with Rayne E.

They were unable to field either Mark Lewis, who remained unbeaten all season, or Grant Sharpe, who won 68 per cent of his sets. Their other main striker Rob Stannard (69 per cent) could only win once and four points went begging.

There were no such availability problems for Rayne E who played all but one of their matches with the same squad of Simon Fleming, Phil Wade and Richard Whiteside – just like the old days for Whiteside who not so long ago went almost ten years without missing a match.

For Rayne D it means an immediate return to division one for the tried and tested Mo Hardy, Cec Butcher, Paul Wellington and Tony Hammond plus the returning Malcolm Wehmeyer.

Black Notley F made a quick return in the other direction and were joined in the relegation spots by Delphi though division three is a tough reward for Kevin

Saunders after beating Stannard, Butcher, Wellington and Hammond in his last few matches.

Notley's G team will replace the F team in division two next season after emerging victorious from a battle with Panfield at the head of division three.

Panfield won their first 12 matches, including a win over Notley G, but were knocked back in their second meeting and Notley's greater consistency took them to the title.

The reliability of Tony Bamsey (59 wins out of 63) and Steve Ascott (33 out of 48) was augmented by the youthful promise of 14-year-old Adam Pitt. It was Pitt's wins in the second match with Panfield over Nick Readhead and Danny Canning, both of whom had beaten him first time round, that effectively ensured that the trophy was heading in Notley's direction.

Final tables:

#### DIVISION 2

	P	W	L	F	A	P
Rayne D	24	18	4	174	66	73
Rayne E	24	17	6	156	84	68
Black Notley D	24	18	2	149	91	67
Black Notley E	24	14	6	149	91	63
Colne A	24	9	12	114	126	44
Liberal B	24	6	13	104	136	38
Removals B (1)	24	7	15	82	158	30
Delphi A	24	4	18	89	151	29
Black Notley F	24	3	20	63	177	19

#### DIVISION 3

	P	W	L	F	A	P
Black Notley G (1)	21	18	1	171	39	72
Panfield A	21	18	2	149	61	66
Rayne F	21	15	4	140	70	60
Rayne G	21	11	10	105	105	44
Black Notley H	21	9	11	108	102	42
Black Notley I	21	3	16	62	148	21
Removals C	21	3	16	55	155	17
Black Notley J	21	1	18	50	160	13

Ron Fosker

4.6.06

table tennis

It has been a busy few weeks for Braintree Table Tennis League's leading player Steve Kerns.

He put in an excellent performance in the veterans world championship in Bremen where he won three out of four sets in his group and progressed to the knockout stages where he lost at 11-9 in the fifth game.

Meanwhile his work off the table has been doubly recognised. The English Table Tennis Association made him this year's winner of the Ivor Montagu Memorial Award, for services to the game, while the Chelmsford League awarded him life membership, a rare honour for a 41-year-old.

On top of that he has emerged unbeaten from a Braintree League season for the sixth year running.

He tops this year's individual averages with his teammate Ian Brown second and Rayne A's Steve Elmes third.

Apart from Eric Green, who played only five matches and is therefore ineligible for the averages, Mark Lewis, in division two, was the other player to go through the season undefeated.

Individual averages, qualification one third of team's matches:

Division 1 (last season's position in brackets): 1(1) Steve Kerns 27 wins in 27 sets, average 100%; 2 (-) Ian Brown 35-38, 92.1; 3 (6) Steve Elmes 25-29, 86.2; 4 (10) Kevin Gowlett 50-59, 84.7; 5 (4) Jon Hill 36-44, 81.8; 6 (3) Steve Pennell 46-58, 79.3; 7 (11) Graham Farmer 28-37, 75.7; 8 (9) Ian Whiteside 31-41, 75.6; 9(5) Ken Lewis 27-36, 75; 10 (-) Trevor Carter 22-30, 73.3.

Division 2: 1 Mark Lewis 47-47, 100; 2 Mo Hardy 25-27, 92.6; 3 Cec Butcher 48-60, 80, 4 Andrew McEwan 47-61, 77.0; 5 Richard Whiteside 55-76, 72.3; 6 Paul Wellington 34-48, 70.8; 7 Simon Fleming 48-69, 69.6; 8 Rob Stannard 43-62, 69.4; 9 Grant Sharpe 32-47, 68.1; 10 Peter Byford 25-37, 67.6.

Division 3: 1 Tony Bamsey, Nick Readhead, both 59-63, 93.7; 3 Brian Hill 44-51, 86.3; 4 Adam Pitt 31-36, 86.1; 5 Danny Canning 49-60, 81.7; 6 Ron Fosker 17-21, 80.9; 7 Colin Fleming 27-35, 77.1; 8 Simon Pohl 29-39, 74.4; 9 David Swash 30-42, 71.4; 10 Steve Ascott 33-48, 68.8.

Ron Fosker

11.6.06

table tennis

Clare Johnson is the new Braintree Table Tennis League ladies' singles champion.

She had a tight five-game battle with Becki Metson before taking the title for the first time in her career.

The match had been postponed from finals night when Metson was suffering from food poisoning and unable to play. As there had been no preliminary rounds this year it was agreed that the trophy would not be awarded by default but would be played separately.

On the day, Johnson repeated her victory over Metson in the ladies' restricted final, which also went the full five games. This time Johnson won 5-11 11-4 11-2 10-12 11-9.

Last season's leading female player Shu Huang, who has not played this season, has made a major impact at national level since reaching the veterans' ranks. She is now ranked No.1 among England female veterans and put in a superb performance at the veterans' world championships in Bremen where she reached the semi final.

She beat German and Japanese opposition in the last 16 and quarter final, then succumbed to the 1998 world champion Larisa Farina, from Russia.

At this year's annual general meeting of the Braintree League it was agreed to put up team entry fees from £6.50 to £7.50 per team and the cup entry fee from £4 to £5 per team.

Treasurer Kevin Saunders explained that although the league had roughly broken even during the season, expenses were continuing to rise and unless there were more teams in the league next year reserves would soon dwindle.

The meeting agreed unanimously to the increase.

The league is in danger of entering next season without a general secretary. Ryan Pitt, who held the post this year, stood down at the AGM but all efforts to find a successor have failed.

Officers elected for next season were: president, Len Woolmer; chairman, Ron Fosker; treasurer, Kevin Saunders; fixtures secretary, Ian Whiteside; competition secretary, Tim Huxtable; development officer, Brian Davison; coaching secretary, Robin Armstrong; inter-league secretary, Alastair Brown; press officer, Ron Fosker; social secretary, Dean Andrews; committee, Steve Ascott, Steve Kerns, Alan McEwan, Erica Metson.

Ron Fosker

25.6.06

table tennis

After a struggle in the league Black Notley F ended their season gloriously when they won the Braintree Table Tennis League handicap knock out cup with a 5-3 win over Liberal B.

It was a tight final that ebbed and flowed before Notley took the last two sets to claim the trophy.

They went into a 1-0 lead when Steve Willis, off scratch, beat Matthew Finch (-2) in four games, but Liberal hit back with wins for Derek Finch (+1) over Karan Baxi (-2) and Ray Fairless (-2) over Clare Johnson (+1).

Both sets went to five games. Finch came back from 2-0 while Fairless rallied after seeing a 2-0 lead become 2-2.

Notley hit back to take the next two when Baxi (-2) beat Matthew Finch (+1) in straight games and Willis (+1) beat Fairless (-2) in four.

**But Liberal came back again as Derek Finch (-2) won his second set of the match, three straight against Johnson (0).**

**The next set was one of the tightest of the evening. Fairless (0) won the first against Baxi (-2) 11-8 but Baxi took the next two 12-10, 11-8 before Fairless pulled back again with an 11-7 win. Baxi knuckled down in the fifth and took the set with an 11-3 scoreline.**

**Johnson then clinched the title with a win in four games against Matthew Finch.**

**It means a Notley team take the cup for the second year running (the H team won it last year) and Notley F, relegated from division two, end up with a trophy on their shelf.**