

Table Tennis Title Challenge Still On A Knife-Edge

There were thrills and spills in the penultimate week of the Bournemouth and District Table Tennis league as the New Milton club were involved in one title chase and two basement struggles. The club's tally from eight matches was two wins, three draws and three defeats, with one of the wins being a maximum pointer from the title chasing E team.

In Div 3, the E team of James Lewis, Gerard Redman and Peter Eke pressed home their title challenge with an excellent 9-1 home win over Bournemouth Sports L. Captain Lewis and Redman both notched up their fifteenth hat-tricks of the campaign and Eke bagged a brace including a terrific three-sets win over Bourne's Alistair Nelhams. The E's were looking for their D team to do them a favour against fellow title-challengers Merton F, but the team of Bev Scott-Johns, Bill Page and Malcolm Elliott got walloped 0-10 down at Southbourne. So it's all down to the final matches of the season to see who out of Milton and Merton go up as champions. Milton (83 points) take on Merton E, and Merton F (82 points) take on Milton's this week's victims Bournemouth Sports L. At least Milton will know what they have to do because Merton F's match comes first.

Up in the Premier, the A team of Alan Gordon, Steve Hemmings and Brian Vibert managed to take a point off third-placed Merton B in a 4-6 away defeat, but it wasn't enough to lift them off the second from bottom spot. It could get even worse for Milton, who have now played all of their matches so they have a bye next week. If bottom placed Bournemouth Sports D take a point off Kinson A in their final match of the season, this will consign Milton to the bottom themselves. In this week's match, Hemmings bagged a brace and Milton's other two came by default when Merton's Danny Allen had to retire injured after losing his match against Hemmings. The doubles would have given a draw and a precious extra point but Hemmings and Vibert lost out over four ends.

In Div 1, the B team of Shaun Newcomb, Paul Bolter and Malcolm Floyd drew 5-5 against Lynwood A for the second time in a row this season. Captain Floyd led from the front with a terrific brace, but Newcomb and Bolter had to be content with one apiece this week. Bolter should have had a brace of his own as he led 2-1 games and was 10-6 points up in the fourth end against Lynwood's Kenny Smith but Smith powered back to win 12-10 and then take the final end. The doubles were needed to force the draw in the end and Floyd and Newcomb emerged worthy winners over four ends.

Div 2 saw the C team of Terry Jenvey, Mick Barry and stand-in Bev Scott-Johns lose 2-8 in their crucial match against fellow strugglers Lynwood B to swap places at second from bottom. Milton could still save themselves in their final match as they face bottom-placed Broadstone C in a "must-win", whilst Lynwood have to take on high-flyers Bransgore B. However, Lynwood only have to draw to push Milton through the trap door. This week, Jenvey put in a marvellous captain's performance to bag a brace, but Barry and Scott-Johns who was playing up from Div 3 could not add to the tally. A precious point was riding on the doubles, but Jenvey and Barry lost in three straight ends.

Div 4 saw the F team of John Parkhouse, Max Doohan and Luke Dewey get the better of Ringwood B for the first time this season with a 6-4 home win. Teenager Doohan played an absolute blinder to land his second hat-trick of the campaign and recent signing Dewey bagged a brace. Dewey only just missed out on his own treble as he lost 9-11 in the fifth end against Ringwood's Dave Beverley. Parkhouse came close to getting on the score-sheet but lost out over five ends against Julian Preston. The doubles were needed to force the victory and Parkhouse and Doohan gelled brilliantly to blow the Ringwood pairing away in three straight sets.

In Div 5, the G team of Keith Kensley, Paul Douglas and David Plumb held Merton J to a 5-5 draw in their own backyard courtesy of captain Kensley's first hat-trick in the league. Teenagers Douglas and Plumb added to the tally by both beating Merton's Ben Hopson. The doubles could have brought victory but Kensley and Douglas lost in three straight sets.

Also in Div 5, the H team of Sandy Fagan, Robert Saunders and Matthew Daish came up with a 5-5 draw of their own against Bournemouth Sports P down at Chapel Gate. Fagan and Saunders bagged a brace apiece and Saunders only just missed out on his hat-trick by losing 11-13 in the fifth end against Bourne's star player Moon Lee who won all three. Ten-year-old Matthew Daish went home empty handed but gave Bourne's Rob Griffiths a really good run for his money. Matthew lost the first two ends but played beyond his years to recover and take the next two to set up a thrilling decider, but Griffiths eventually took it 11-7. The doubles were needed for the draw and Fagan and Saunders combined well to take them over four ends.