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# Table Tennis DIGEST

## LIVERPOOL & DISTRICT TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE

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### EDITORIAL

The bigger ball, 40mm, has been passed and studying the news release makes one wonder if those who play are ever considered by the decision makers. The decision was carried overwhelming by a SGM called by the ITTF for the sole purpose of pushing through without any real trials the introduction of a larger ball. Had they not got their way they would more than likely have taken this out of the Rules of Table Tennis to enable a decision to be made by one of their Committee's. However, having got their way, they have left us all in limbo by agreeing to only introduce it from 1st October for international play, this by a very small majority. National Associations will be able to opt out of its use for internal competitions and this poses the question, what will the ETTA do? It would appear that their most likely course of action is to ask the AGM and National Council to agree to use the larger ball for ranking events from 1st September - what has happened to 1st October - and allow leagues and counties the option to continue for a period with the present ball for internal competitions. Playing with different rubbers on successive days poses no problem, players do it all the time, but playing with a 40mm ball one day and a 38mm the next will pose many problems.

A Regulation is intended to cover selected matters and apply only to those involved. A Rule covers everyone able to comply with it. So when is a Rule not a Rule? When the ITTF say so.

Clearly it should have been effective for all play and introduced at an acceptable time i.e. the end of a season.

Not content with causing maximum confusion this SGM compounded this with the introduction of experimental rule changes covering service action and a scoring system of 11 up. these to apply to specific international events. Details of the ETTA press release are on page 10.

We must be bottom in the volunteer stakes, Wirral must be top. They have an abundance to assist with coaching, some from Liverpool, we can only muster five players willing to give their time. We lose promising youngsters because we cannot devote time to them. The City Leisure Services assist us in various ways from which all members benefit. In return they expect us to develop TT in our city. Wirral have numerous cadets and juniors playing, we have four juniors. It is time to show willing and get involved in a positive way and ensure the continued future of our league by way of producing home bred juniors. Try Wavertree Tennis Centre, any Friday between 5 & 7pm. You will be more than welcome.

## L&C LEAGUE REPORT DON DAVIES

Champions again. For the 5th season in succession our Men's team has beaten all opposition, the winning title points being gained via a narrow victory over Bolton. It wasn't all plain sailing for we did it without Keith Williams, who was in East Anglia helping the Police Team secure the National Veterans title.

John Rankin (2) and Paul Hutchings gave us a great start, the former accounting for Bolton No.1. Darren Howarth. The home side levelled at 3-all before Paul restored the lead. Ken Jackson stood in for Keith and overcame the disappointment of heavy defeats in his first two sets, winning 18 in the 3rd, to ensure us of at least a draw. John clinched the points with his third victory, beating Dave Griffiths in three, as had Paul, two games earlier. Keith will be collecting his seventh Div.1. title medal, I wonder if anyone has ever bettered that. Adam Robertson played his part, but with such a busy diary of events, plus school studies, he has been unable to play.

Well done, lads, the Leagues should be proud of you.

In the Ladies division, after winning the opening match, we were unable to turn out a team in any of the next four matches. Brenda missing three matches due to illness from which she has still not recovered. Paula was working for one match and on holiday for another. Delyth Davies and Sue Burgess were unavailable in different matches and the strict application of the regulations meant each match had to be forfeited. It was then decided by the League that the team be withdrawn.

On a happier note, a title success seems certain for the Vets 'B' team, who have a 100% record from five outings, thanks to Alex Johns, Brenda Bouey, Ahmed Thabet and Sue Burgess. They have matches against Wirral 'C' and 'A' to gain the two points to head off Warrington who we beat 7-3.

Alan Chase, Ted Birch, Dave Evans and Ricky Brown also boast a 100% return in Div.1. and must gain at least a draw against Macclesfield to take the title. Unfortunately, whether they finish first or second, under present regulations they cannot be promoted to the top division.

Stockport Veterans have been a bogey team to Liverpool over the past eleven years with not one victory having been recorded in that time. The Chesh-

ire side, led by Roger Hampson, has annexed the title on all eleven occasions. This time when the two teams met we had hopes of breaking our duck, for Keith Williams had been in fine form and Alex Johns, in for the injured Peter Lee, had beaten Hampson a few weeks earlier. Things were looking bleak when we found ourselves trailing 3-1, but Keith defeated the tricky Steve Dobbins and then teamed up with Ken Jackson to secure a doubles success to put us back in the match. Ken scored a tremendous victory over Hampson (4-3), and although Hampson levelled matters against Alex, Ken edged us back into the lead by beating Phil Biggs. In an exciting finale a relieved Hampson played a captain's role in beating Keith to square the match and keep alive their title hopes. Liverpool must now hope that Blackburn, 6-4 victors over our boys, lose to Stockport, and that Oldham beat Stockport. Some chance!

The Veterans, holders of the Dennis Smith Memorial Trophy, reached the final for the third successive year with a 5-1 victory against a Lancaster & Morecambe team containing former English Electric player, Colin Pratt. Giving six points start in every game, Ken and Keith each won two with Alex adding the other set.

Their final opponents will again be LBH who beat Liverpool in the inaugural final in 1998. This final will be played in Liverpool on Thursday 6th April.

### Norman Cook Memorial Trophy Semi-final:

When the holders met Oldham it turned out to be one of the most exciting and nail biting encounters I have ever witnessed. Oldham were boosted when they found they would benefit from a 3 point start in each game, but the home side were swept aside by the holders in the opening three sets. Keith was in tremendous form, hitting a torrent of lightening shots past a more than useful Darryl Meredith. Paul and John making it 0-3 before Mandy Winskill got the better of an out of match practice, Delyth Davies. That win seemed to kick start the home side into action, next to fall being Paul and John, who after winning the opening game, faced an inspired Oldham pair who took the set. The match score was levelled at 3-3 with a mixed doubles success before Keith, in a bizarre set won in three after dropping the first -21. He felt the original glue he had used was too fast, but after re-glueing he had difficulty keeping the ball on the table. Trailing in the second, he borrowed Paul's bat and regained his form to secure a 4-3 lead. Then came the most

thrilling encounter of the night.

Paul took the first against Prakash Varsani, who raised his game in amazing fashion to save match point at 19/20 in the second before sneaking home in the third to keep his team in the competition. The decider had everything that a neutral fan could ask for, but not a non playing captain. It was pulsating entertainment with both players performing with maximum skill and 100% effort. Paul has lost very few sets whilst playing for the League, even fewer when involved in a tight decider. It was nip and tuck all the way, but Paul's composure and will to win helped him notch one of his most vital victories for our League, overcoming his gallant opponent 21/19 to put us into the final for the 8th time since 1989. Both sides deserving of great credit for providing a tremendous encounter, played in an exemplary sporting manner. Our opponents in the final will now be Mid Cheshire who defeated LBH 5-1. We were deprived of a possible second final against LBH due to an unfortunate clash of dates preventing them from putting out their strongest team. This final will be played on Thursday 13 April, venue not yet known.

### **NATIONAL JUNIOR LEAGUE.**

At the start of the 3rd days play our team of Paul O'Donnell, Robert Aldridge and Lee Proffitt, were leading their division having played one more than their nearest rivals. By the end of play they had effectively dropped out of the running and are currently in 4th place. The day got off to a bad start when they dropped two vital sets to Wirral 'B' but picked themselves up in the next two matches with draws against probable winners, Wirral 'A' and strong contenders, Manchester 'A'. With everything to play for when they met yet another contender, Tameside, they fell apart and were soundly beaten 5-1. This match also saw a first defeat in this league for Paul O'Donnell, P30; W29. This match highlighted the need for an experienced non playing captain to give advice during and before sets, lack of experience in controlling and pacing their matches being a major factor in their defeat.

With an easier run-in than the other contenders they could still finish a very creditable third.

### **SECRETARY'S DESK MIKE POWER**

In the previous issue, I asked for opinions regarding our League owning or renting its own premises. I also asked about usage or whether anyone felt we needed a League HQ. My postman has never been so busy!! I would thank all those members who have written to me regarding this, especially the invisible man!

One to look forward to. The Merseyside Grand Prix, scheduled for August 2000 has been granted GP 'Major' status and moved to a prime slot of first weekend in January 2001. This has been made possible by the City Leisure Services agreeing to up their support of table tennis by increasing their GP financial support. This change guarantees that, barring injury, all the top players will enter. This is an enormous boost for our City and should be a tremendous advertisement for the game. Hopefully as many players as possible from our league will enter, but even if you don't, it will be a weekend that you won't want to miss spectatorwise. Hopefully this will become an annual event and over time attract more youngsters to take up the game.

Your Liverpool teams have been performing admirably having won 17 out of 18 matches and suffering only one defeat. Unfortunately we had no alternative other than to withdraw our Ladies team from the L&C league due to shift work and illness affecting the few female players available to us. This is no one's fault, but it does emphasise the shortage of youngsters, particularly girls, taking up table tennis. Bring on more women, I've always thought that. The Men's team have, for the 5th time in a row, become L&C League champions and all the players, namely Keith Williams, Adam Robertson, John Rankin, Paul Hutchings and Ken Jackson, are to be congratulated. Our veterans 1st team, Dave Evans, Alan Chase Ted (the unstoppable) Birch and Ricky Brown have also had an excellent season and are currently top of Div.1. We have also reached two major cup finals, the Dennis Smith Memorial Trophy and the Norman Cook Memorial Trophy. Our opponents will be LBH and Mid Cheshire, the matches to be played on Friday 25th February and Thursday 13 April. Try to get to these matches and support our team.

In case you don't know, it is now too late to submit rule amendments for next season. Only one club having submitted any, plus your M.C. I will

that virtually all of you are completely happy with our current Rules and the way your League is run! Just a note - I was going to ask Paul Gittins to spice up my column and make it a tad more humorous. I decided not to bother as I don't think anyone reads it. In addition, I don't think there are any more Ken Armson jokes that haven't already been said (if you don't understand this, ask Paul, not me).

On a serious note, at a recent 2nd division match, John Watson of Bath St. was taken seriously ill. On behalf of the committee, I would wish John a complete and speedy recovery. We look forward to seeing you back at the table soon, John.

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## **TOURNAMENT SCENE KEN ARMSON**

With this magazine you should have received an entry form for our 'Closed' championships and I hope that you will submit an entry. Over the years the M.C. have tried to make these championships as inviting as possible for all members, whatever their ability. The Divisional singles being one such event. We need a much larger entry if we are to continue with div. singles, so why not give it a try. My aim as your Tournament Secretary and Referee is to maintain the success of our championships, ensure everyone get as many matches as possible and that the many obtain as much enjoyment and satisfaction from having entered as the few. That is why I put two players through to the k/out in group play events last season.

With this in mind, I have agreed to the reinstatement of dual entry to the O55 and O40 events

Having broken down entries for all events it was apparent that most of those from lower divisions entering the O55 and O40 had also only entered the Div. singles. Depriving them of a dual O55/O40 entry meant a reduction in match play for them, this not being in keeping with my aims.

I have to say, however, that I was disappointed to hear of grumbles from stronger players about our earlier decision, even threats of a boycott! Not the sort of thing I would expect from normally sensible and dedicated players. Such threats do not bother me, having spent many years at the sharp end of industrial relations. What does concern me is that I spoke of this in my Closed Report and asked for views but received not a single response.

From this I would deduce we have bullet makers but no one to fire them. For the uninitiated I would say that no response must always be taken as agreement, not disagreement. Next time, air your views openly in your magazine, as I did.

Because of this change players will have to accept a later overall finishing time and give maximum co-operation to ensure events keep moving. This means getting to your allocated table promptly, keeping knock-up periods to maximum two minutes, umpiring when you have lost, assisting with umpiring if requested to do so and holding your "why I lost or how I won" debate some other time. We will commence play at 0900 with the O55 followed by introduction of Div. singles from approximately 1030. The O40s will be introduced a.s.a.p. after 1230 i.e. as Group competitors become available from the O40s. Anyone entering only these events should be finished at very latest by 1500.

I hope to progressively introduce MS Groups from 1430hrs and Doubles from 1730. Anticipated finishing time being 1900/1930. These timings are provisional and are based on last season entry figures.

The moral everyone should bear in mind is "if you keep winning then you must expect and be prepared to keep getting called on to play."

I hope that by providing you with this advance scheduling information it will encourage more players from every division to enter.

Competitors reaching semi final and final stages of events to be played on Finals Night (Police Club, Tuesday 18th April, commencing at 1900hrs), should note that they will be expected to report at 18.45hrs.

We have again maintained entry fees at last season's level in appreciation of your support and as an encouragement to all members to enter. To the many who never enter, I would say "give it a try, you will enjoy the experience and want to enter again next season".

The question of prizes for divisional events is one area where you could air your views. I believe we should have prizes in kind, others feel a suitable trophy is more appealing to winners as a keepsake. If you have any views on this, enclose them with your entry form.

I just wish you could all be winners, that way we would have a massive entry, a full weekend of play and a very happy Referee. As Clint Eastwood would say, "make my day".

## DIVISION ONE PAUL GITTINS

To all those desperate bachelors out there waiting for a 'Leap year' maiden to propose, I feel it is my duty to persuade you to say, no. Remember that marriage is a three ring circus; engagement ring, wedding ring and suffering. If, however, you do decide to take the 'leap' then take some comfort, as I do, in the knowledge that beauty is only a light switch away.

Anyway, as well as trying to prevent my wife from reading the above passage, I'm here to talk about the beautiful game of table tennis. It would appear that although Polices' destiny to the championship is almost guaranteed, I almost fell into the trap of not being able to distinguish good performances from the usual mundane ones. This was highlighted when they met WSM's who, I'm sure, didn't expect to walk away with a 4-6 deficit having fielded Adam, Dave and Wayne. However, Paul, Chris and John played tremendously on the night, losing only to Adam and the doubles. It is also easy for me to bypass young Adam's achievements on the night, but when one considers that only John reached double figures in both his games, then this is an example of the brilliance of the lad. I'm quite envious of his rare talent, my only comfort is knowing that he will soon, if not already, be faced with a hurdle that has affected all of us at some stage - girls. Take it from me, Adam, your backhand may suffer, but it beats 'knocking up' any day.

Although Cadwa's chance of catching up with Police is perhaps somewhat remote, it's still within reach, particularly now that Keith and Kevin are turning out together. Their 9-1 win against the ever solid H.H. is a dramatic reversal of their 2-8 defeat earlier in the season. And when one considers they have still to play Police, then perhaps a twist is on the cards. Talking of twists, I'm sure W'loo will not be happy that Cadwa played one short against their relegation battling 'A' team, which, coupled with Ken Hartley's fine win over Peter Taylor, gifted the 'A' team 4 valuable points.

WSM's in my view are doing remarkably well considering the loss of Bernie and Rob. Dave Roberts is still the regular unassuming hero, joined by the equally impressive Wayne Percival and the ever improving Alice Howard. Their 8-2 wins over Bath St. and Cadwa 'A' doesn't

reflect the quality of both matches, a high percentage of games having gone to three. Wayne's good win over Ken Jackson was equalled by Alice's fine wins over Fred Brainbridge and Mike Keane, although it would appear Mike later retired due to an injury. It was also good to see WSM's young Tim Ternent given a taste of Div. one TT against YM 'A'. Although he lost his three, the experience will have done no harm.

You would think the fielding of different players would be as disastrous as pulling Peter Wass's finger. Not so, YM 1st have been unable to field the same players in their last 4 matches but the team have moved up the table and will probably finish in the top 5. Pat McLoughan, in my view, has established himself as one of the top players and is having a great season. He won all his matches against their 'A' team, Jeff Huntington also beating Dele 22 in the 3rd.

Bath St. 'A' are ferociously battling to finish in the top four. This would be a tremendous achievement, having been without Brenda for some time. A 7-3 defeat by their 1st team saw Dave Evans btg Mike and Fred, Ian providing the 3rd btg Mike in 2 straight. a week, they say, can make all the difference, and what a difference. An 8-2 win against W'loo capping a solid team performance, only Alex losing to Alan and Clare News missing the chance of a hat-trick by losing to Ted. Ian got man of the match and took the ball home.

Bath St and WSM 'A' are competing for the middle table place. Ken Jackson continues to chalk up 3 in most matches as was the case when they beat both Marconi and Cadwa 'A' 6-4. The WSM team is very similar to Bath St with a regular set of established players who battle for every point, as did Roy against Jeff Huntington and Bob Edwards, both sets being 24/22 in the 3rd in Roy's favour. Eddie Crowley, however, spoilt Roy's fun beating him 2 straight for his win of the season.

It's good to see H. House's Ken Connor making a return, he will be happy, as will colleague Ray Jackson, with fine wins agst Ahmed Thabet that contributed to their 6-4 win. Phil Musgrove has also featured for H.H. and saved the whitewash against Cadwa by beating Mike Mahoney, and prior to Christmas helped them to a 6-4 win over YM 'A'. This match saw Phil having a great win over Dele, but then losing to Ahmed, who in turn lost to Alex. Quite a match.

It really is touch and go at the foot of the league, and although Marconi are certainties for relegation they will be taking a few scalps with them. Eddie Crowley using his late burst of form to good effect with wins over Roy Smith, Ian Campbell, Mike Keane and Fred Bainbridge. His team mates Bob and Ray making it a miserable night for Fred Bainbridge and earning the team a well deserved 4 points.

I've got some good news and some bad news about the W'loo team. The good news being that they managed their first match win of the season by beating Marconi 8-2. Alan and Ted winning their 3 and Mike getting one against Eddie Crowley. The bad news is that scientists have revealed that beer contains small traces of female hormones. To prove their theory they fed 100 men with 12 pints of beer and observed that 100% of them started talking nonsense and couldn't drive. Ladies.... the truth hurts.

The crunch game between W'loo and Cadwa went 6-4 in Cadwa's favour. Ken Hartley had a great night winning his 3 in 2 straight. Billy Hargreaves did well to take Ted and Mick, whilst Mike Power will be happy with his win over Mick. It is difficult to predict who will follow Marconi, but it appears that Cadwa 'A' have, at this time, a slight point advantage. This, coupled with Ken Hartley's form, would probably make them favourites to stay up. But you know me, I never make predictions, and I never will.

My ending true story is one that epitomises scouse humour and relates to my somewhat reluctant involvement in a recent pub raid in the early hours of a small back street pub. As we entered the pub, I was astonished to see that the bar was full of recently pulled pints. I shouted across to the Manager, "don't you ever stop serving beer in this pub?" This being instantly answered by an old regular sat at the corner of the bar, who replied, "Yeah, Lent."

P.S. Unfortunately, Paul was unable to hide this article from me, but fear not, I am not a malicious woman. In fact, Paul often says that a husband is like a fine wine: he gets better with age. I couldn't agree more, so I've locked him in the cellar.

Jeanette (Paul's ex-wife)!

## DIVISION TWO MIKE POWER

Police 'A' have now pulled out the lead I expected, thanks mainly to a 7-3 victory over nearest rivals Maghull. Both the Gittins brothers came through the night unscathed against a full strength Maghull team. This victory has put them 15 points clear, both teams having played 15 matches. An unsailable lead in my opinion, for what it's worth. I still feel the Maghull boys can clinch 2nd place, but having said that, Fords are at long last making a concerted effort to catch them. Fords are currently one point ahead and played one game more. The teams are due to meet in mid March at Fords in a match that may well decide the 2nd promotion place. I have noticed that Tim Wearden has become a regular player for Fords and is largely responsible for their current run of success. I had previously tipped Marconi 'A' for 3rd place (oops) but this opinion was swept away in the wind when Fords demolished them 9-1 on Marconi's table. Frank James is another Ford player who is starting to play consistently and is winning 70% of his games. Their only poor result came against Bootle JC when they lost 6-4. Tim won his 3 but Billy Proffitt and Alf Perry could only manage one point between them. It is due to lapses of this nature, were Fords do not play to their strengths, that I believe Maghull will just about gain promotion above them.

The only remaining 100% record has gone, Andy Lloyd ruined it for Paul Gittins with an excellent win against him. I understand that since that result Andy has suffered some back trouble that left him sidelined for a few games, hopefully his ailment is not too serious. Ray Parkinson emulated Roger 'Dodger' Neal when M'web 'A' entertained M'hull. M'hull won 6-4 but Ray was MOM winning his three in two straight. Andy lost 19 in the 3rd to Steve and 18 in the 3rd to Fred. Everyone should stand up and applaud Ray Parkinson for volunteering to write these notes next season. Only joking, Ray, keep your hair on.

Down at the bottom we are already starting to wave bye bye to Marconi 'B'. Whether they come bottom or second from bottom remains to be seen, but I am confident they will fill one of those positions. Trevor Owens must have one of the top ten averages in the division but unfortunately his team mates are not quite up to this level of play, although I am sure they will ultimately benefit from the experience. After 13 matches they have yet to win, but

came close against fellow strugglers Police 'B' with a draw. Trevor again winning his 3, Ted Gilmour and Bobby Bell beating Dave Oakes. Jon Dyson and Terri-Ann won two apiece for Police.

The other relegation spot looks like being between Police 'B' and Bath St 'B'. Six points separate them after 14 matches with Police having the advantage, Bath St. having suffered a severe shock and setback when John Watson was taken seriously ill after a match at Marconi. The important thing in this instance is not table tennis, but a full and complete recovery by John. I am sure you will all join me in wishing him just that.

The middle of the table is a free for all. Bootle JC have games in hand, both M'web teams are there or thereabouts, WSM 'B' are not far behind the top three. Marconi 'A' are not doing as well as I expected but nevertheless are in the pack. W'loo having drawn four games on the trot (don't think I've seen that before) are doing just fine, even though they have won only 3 matches from 13. According to my records only 4 teams have a match average of 5 or more, these being Police 'A', Fords, M'hull and W'loo. The remaining teams, with the exception of Marconi 'B', are pretty much the same. If you exclude matches involving the top three you will find that 75% of all other matches ended with a score of 6-4 or 5-all (according to the cards in my possession).

As I haven't many cards to write from this time, and as only one has any match comments on it, these notes may be somewhat shorter than usual. Do you all know there is a space for match comments on the score cards? Could we utilise this space more efficiently for adverts? The answer may be, use it or lose it. I don't mind what you write as long as it is not detrimental and is about table tennis. You could even make suggestions as to who you think would make a good 2nd div. note writer, for you must be fed up of me by now, I know I am. Going back to that solitary card, thank you Mike (the landlord) Moran. Bootle JC v W'loo, match score 8-2 for Bootle. Brian Crolley bt Ritchie Cragg and Andy Armstrong, Mike bt Ritchie, Peter Holmes and Andy. Ken Strahan bt Peter and Ritchie and in the doubles Brian and Mike

bt Peter and Andy. Peter bt Brian and Andy bt Ken. the match could easily have ended in a draw, Peter only btg Brian 19 in the 3rd, but four other games won by Bootle were very close and could have gone either way, an example being Mike btg Andy 24/22 in the 3rd.

Now if all cards had some notes on them, even if it only said "Hello Mike" at least I would know you are listening. Bye for now. Oh, one last thing, did you hear about the two cannibals eating a clown? One said to the other, "does this taste funny to you."

### DIVISION 3

### SYLVIA GRAHAM

It doesn't seem that long since the season started and the last set of notes were written, but doesn't time fly when you're having fun!! I guess some wouldn't call it fun when you're fighting for each and every point, attempting to win the accolade of your team and opponents, only to come off after losing deuce in the 3rd, with sweat dripping like blood from all your pores to be told "at 19 all you should have .....!"

Oh for the introduction of 'Time Outs' in league matches so we can see how good (or bad?) these 'hindsight' coaches really are. I'm sure we've all been there, but doesn't it make you want to scream. Well, enough of my twaddle, lets see how the division is progressing. I reckon that there are four teams on the promotion ladder but the rungs are getting more slippery with every match. The four are YM 'B', the two Bath St teams and JC 'A'. There isn't much to choose between them, which is obvious from the matches against each other when a draw or close win is the usual result. Consequently it is the other teams in the division who will decide the eventual winner by continuing to fight and take as many points as possible off the top four. I'm not going to make any predictions because they are all good enough to be promoted.

At the other end of the table, with only six matches to go, there seems to be a more clear cut result. I think WSM 'D' have left it too late to make up a 20 point deficit and M'hull 'B' also appear destined to leave us for warmer climes. In other seasons both these teams would have safely occupied mid table positions. It's a sign of the times when every No.1. in this division could comfortably hold their own in the 2nd division.

All the other teams are pretty safe, winning some, losing some. M'hull 'A' had a good draw agst

W'loo 'B' with Rod Bulmer and Chris Roberts picking up the five for M'hull. The comment on the card was "Julie rarely loses two" but looking at this season's results it could be modified to "Julie rarely loses any". I hadn't realised how many scalps she had accrued until I checked the cards. She plays combination bats particularly well. Anyway, come on everybody, Julie is now the person to beat! Sue Burgess also seems to have stepped up a gear since Christmas and is pulling off some tremendous wins including John Higham, Roly Wright, Alan Davies, and Rob Peverall. Ritchie Jones of WSM 'C' is as awkward as ever, but seems to be the only person to have beaten George Smith to date, and Jimmy (Seles) Clewett is playing his best bang-bang table tennis for some seasons. His own team say I've to mention his famous burps and belchs that adorn all his games.

The best comments on a card are for the match, Cadwa 'C' and Bath St 'D'. It was only Cadwa's second win of the season, which makes it all the more special and it keeps them safely away from the relegation zone. Rob Peverall recorded his 2nd win over Colin Owens in a season - no mean feat, and Rob and Alan Davies won both their singles. Cadwa also took both doubles to give them a much needed 6-4.

Good wins:- Harry McGanity bt Chris Roberts in 3; Eddie Preston bt Tony Connor and Mabel Neary both in 2 - Steady, Eddie, these sudden rushes of blood to the head cannot be good for you! Peter Howden bt Paul O'Donnell 20 in the 3rd. How did you do it, Peter, cos I certainly didn't? Jimmy Clewett bt Bill Harris 2 straight.

Close Matches:- Not many on the cards, but Colin Owen bt Rob Peat 9, -20, 20. In same match Rob bt Mark Patterson 21, -20, 19. Derek Sullivan bt Steve Kee 18 & 22. Eddie Preston bt Bill Salter -20, 13, 20.

Face Savers:- Tony Connor bt Tom Killip 19 & 15 and Derek Sullivan 13 & 14. Mike Ashton/Gordon Langshaw bt Steve Kee/Jim Clewett 22 & 20. Well, thats all for now. These notes are only meant to comment, inform and occasionally amuse(?)... if they have upset anyone I'll issue a "short" apology.

**SUPPORT YOUR 'CLOSED'  
TOURNAMENT  
SUNDAY 16TH APRIL**

## DIVISION FOUR      DOUG BAKER

We're well into the season now, having turned the corner, so to speak, and the early leaders are showing no signs of dropping the baton.

Police 'C' have been travelling well, but Harry Reeve stood firm for Linacre winning his two. He took the scalps of Gareth Jones and Len Dyson - a very close shave, 19 in the 3rd - the only joy in an 8-2 defeat. Len also enjoyed a close 3rd game win over Karen Gibson in their 9-1 drubbing. Alan Willis gaining their sole point beating Brian Burrows. I gave you my warning in the last edition; Gareth, Len, Dave and Brian consider a 7-3 victory an off day.

Speaking in percentages, 60% of cards show either a draw or 6-4 win, which is a higher figure than the first part of the season. Obviously, the figure is even higher if Police games aren't included, which might indicate that there's not a lot to choose between most teams in this division, and teams have settled down. A kind of pear shape has developed with no one team certain of relegation or runner up spot.

Messrs Christie, Gregory, Gibson & McGanity imposed an 8-2 defeat on Bootle YM - four sets going to 3, but here only Kathy Haydon was jubilant for YM beating Mr Gregory. Whereas in a thrilling doubles Phil and Steve came back from a game down to wrestle the next two against Mike and Arthur 20, 20. The same Terrible Four annihilated WSM 'F' 9-1 who at one stage found themselves 8-0 down. Maghull have had some venue problems, water seepage (nasty, that) has been slowly turning the floor into a boating lake as the evening wore on. Hopefully, they'll be able to find someone with a cork or bucket, else they'll be forced to keep the heating off.

Cadwa 'D' put together an impressive 7-3 victory over WSM 'G' despite a bad start. One set was claimed due to the non-availability of a player, despite protestations that he would turn up. Perhaps the WSM captain was thinking back to the previous fixture when Cadwa had difficulties putting a team out and were unable to contact someone held up in a club meeting. This was compounded by someone (Ok, it was me) being paged for a works problem before his next match and returning after the remaining games had been played. Thus, in total, WSM 'G' have taken 5 points from untested games against Cadwa 'D'.



Stablemates WSM 'F' won by the same margin at W'loo, who in turn won their 3rd game of the season home to a depleted M'web 'B'. Austin and Harry for W'loo and Alan for M'web, bagging a brace each. More was to come as W'loo beat Cadwa 6-4, only Doug Baker winning his singles (sorry, guys, couldn't not mention it!)

M'web's game v Linacre seems to have been a lot closer than the 7-3 scoreline suggests. 7 sets going to 3 with John Ashley's 63 points to Jack Davidson's 66 being the closest. Linacre suffered similarly at the hands of M'hull 'C' and WSM 'G'.

H. House 'A' have a rock solid three of Clein, Henshaw and Poole, who can almost guarantee 4 points out of 6 against anyone. Eddie can be nicknamed '2 straight' as he never bothers with a 3rd game. He is confidence personified as he is prepared to sacrifice the first ten points of a game to probe weaknesses. As exemplified against Trevor Dolder, when he came from way back to steal it 20 & 18 (such praise should be worth a reduction in me Council tax). However, hiccups at H.H. or do they court controversy? Availability problems prevented them "putting out a side" (in both senses of the phrase) in their Forrest Cup semi, so WSM 'E' went through by default to be assured of some shiny time being presented to them at the end of season bash. Surely something could have been done, some rule bent (a liddle bit), some inconvenience endured to get this match played? An uncontested semi final is too high a price to pay. Imagine if this had been the final! I wonder how teams knocked out by H.H. in previous rounds feel?

Bath St 'E' now have a settled team of Karen, Dave, Alan and Chris. Karen and Chris proved themselves against the mighty M'hull. Their match with WSM 'F' being quite an event. Stan Clarke had to play out of his skin to beat Karen 2 straight. Ken just managed double figures in his first game against Karen, heeding his captain's advice to good effect and taking the next two. The top was WSM's, the bottom Bath St's as Chris Blackburn turned in a characteristic steady performance. Doubles shared, points shared. BS 'E' also managed the rarest of things, a win at M'hull, despite

Alan losing twice from deuce to Wilf.

In the WSM F v G derby, Stan Clarke took the opening match, inflicting his first ever defeat over Bob Owen in a thrilling game that went all the way to 20 in the 3rd. The 'F' team then surged ahead 3-1 but John Gratton helped pull it back by charming the points off Stan and Paul Banks. Gordon Langshaw gave his all but couldn't stop Ken, 19 in the 3rd. the match of the night, nay of the reporting period, again goes to Ken (Norton) Roberts v Steve (Ali) Perry. It was remarkable enough in their previous meeting, but this time they re-defined stamina and longevity. Ken took the 1st by 3 points. Steve replied with the same margin in the 2nd. Then it became nip and tuck as they faced off (geddit?) in the decider. Deuce followed deuce. Ten of them. It was like a scene from Casualty, as hearts stopped and were resuscitated. Steve edged it and netted victory 31/29, on a judge's decision. Will WSM please, in the interests of humanity, put them in the same team to prevent this annual torture for all concerned.

The WSM derbys are hotly contested affairs and usually end up as marginal victories to the alphabetically higher team. WSM 'E' have established a gap to put themselves clear in 2nd place. 10 points out of their last 3 games are a warning to Bob, John, Gordon and Ken not to slow up, despite the lack of any obvious challenger. Bootle YM's draw with them was as good as a win. Mike Hughes taking a game off John, Arthur taking a game off Bobby, 19 in the 3rd. Kathy btg Ken over 3 and Jim Geddes undefeated v Gordon and Ken.

Linacre are hanging on in there, and rivals W'loo and WSM 'G' are in the Last Chance saloon and must now look to others to slip up.

The W'tree and Cadwa clubs have got themselves backed into a corner, mainly due to the difficulties of operating so many teams and having players play up. For example, on a personal note, you won't be seeing me playing in this division, as due to unmanageable circumstances at my club I'll be playing in the 3rd for the rest of the season. But don't fret, I'll finish my contract to write these musings on this division's too-ings and goings.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Apologies for print smearing. This being due to printer problems and no time to rectify before publishing date.

**DIVISION 5****KEN ARMSON**

If proved correct, rumours of a misdeed involving a team from this division may cast a blight over the season. Meanwhile M'web continue to trample all teams as they steamroller their way to promotion., dropping only 13 sets to date from 12 matches, and have 3 matches in hand on nearest challengers, A'burth. Still not possible to say who will go up with them for A'burth have played 2 more matches than Bath St 'F' and have only a 23 point lead.

For a div. with so few teams there have been far too many, played shorts and w/overs. Hope are woefully behind with their fixtures and it is rumoured they will not be back next season. Delyth Davies enduring yet another defeat, this time to Tony Wong of YM, and narrowly escaping defeat by Alvin Tso 23 & 24. Graham Rollinson repeating his win against her to demonstrate his previous win was no fluke. Too much studying, not enough practice, I suspect. YM turn in good results, have strength in depth, but have failed to claw their way into the reckoning.

Early results do count, A'burth beat BS 'F' 8-2 in Wk.1. and lost the return 6/4. Overall 12/8 for A'burth, and that might just be enough to secure them 2nd place. Promotion is about consistency and not much of that has been around. BS 'F' btg A'burth 6/4 and only managing the same score agst the 'A' team. A'burth losing to YM 7/3; BS 'F' 6/4, then battering their own 'A' team 9/1. so it is still any one from a possible 3 to join M'web.

H.H. 'B' continue to be an enigma and languish next to bottom yet have the ability to climb but seem unable to turn their ability into points. they lost 8/2 to YM with 7 sets going to 3 and only one going their way.

Strangely, unlike higher divisions, many matches still finish 9/1's etc. Whereas higher divisions have noticed a levelling of ability, this is not reflected in a division were you would most expect it to occur.

A'burth have lost the services of No.1. Graham Rollinson arising from an operation on a finger. This may seriously affect their hopes of promotion and open the way for Bath St. 'F' to move up. Everything still to play for and along with that I hope we may yet see Police record a victory.

Hope we see a good entry for this Division's event at our 'Closed' c'ships. Why not give it a try.

**ITTF INNOVATIONS****40MM BALL**

The increase in the diameter of the ball from 38mm to 40mm, approved by a majority of over 90% at SGM of the ITTF held in Kulala Lumpar has sent shock waves around the table tennis world. The change was expected but the speed of its implementation has surprised top players. By a very small majority it was agreed it will apply for international play from 1st October 2000.

The strongest argument for the larger ball was it showed up better on TV, reduces spin and speed, and hopefully will increase length of rallies making the game more attractive to watch, and easier for people to play.

National associations will be able to opt out of using it for internal competitions. For England, Alan Ransome has said that "following previous similar situations, it is most likely that the AGM and National Council will agree to use the larger ball for ranking events from 1st September 2000, but allow local leagues the option to continue for a period with the smaller ball for internal competitions.

**MORE EXPERIMENTAL RULE CHANGES**

The same SGM also agreed two more changes for an experimental period.

A scoring system of games up to 11 to be used at a number of international events up to, but not including the 46th World Championships, when the results of this trial will be reviewed. the intention being to make all points 'key' and games more exciting to play and watch.

**SERVICE RULE:** From the Olympics to the Pro-Tour Finals, January 2001, the service rule will be changed for some international events to the effect that the ball must be struck in front of all parts of the body so that it is clearly visible to the opponent and the umpire, this is to prevent the 'shielding' or obscuring during contact of the ball by the free arm or body, so as to disguise/hide the spin from the opponent. A common practice which makes it difficult to return serves safely, thereby leading to shorter rallies and the sport as a poorer spectacle. *If deemed successful the service rule is certain to be changed.*

*NOTE: Shouldn't bother our league, most players not serving in accordance with existing rules. Some not knowing the difference between 'near vertical' and 'backwards', not to mention a height of 6" or daylight between hand and ball!*

## NETS AND EDGES

Current 38mm balls being expensive, what will the 40mm cost? More materials being needed for ball and packaging.

Have you noticed the increase in player appearances. Could it have anything to do with medals and 'Closed' qualification?

Matthew Syed retained his Commonwealth Singles title in Singapore recently.

Bath St. are hoping for an "Awards for All" grant to extend and improve their club room.

Chris Ford beat John Rankin to take the Men's title in the Lancashire Open, beating Kevin Dolder in the semis. Well done, Chris.

Dave Evans, assisted by a 12 hour TT marathon at Bath St. has raised more than £2000 for the Blind Guide Dogs Assoc. He raised £1400 of this by his own efforts, which included a TT marathon in Preston.

Final draws have been made for the 100 Club and cheques sent to winners. A new fundraising scheme is to replace it with monies raised going into a HQ Building Fund.

John Watson, Bath St. whilst out of danger is still very ill following his recent heart attack. We all wish him well and hope to see him back with his Club next season.

Keith Williams added to his already impressive tally of Veteran successes as a winning team member in the National Veterans c'ships.

Watch out for Chris Ford and the big policeman, John Rankin in our 'Closed' C'ships. They disposed of Kevin Dolder and Keith Williams in the semis of the Lancashire Closed.

Our thanks to City Leisure Services Directorate for obtaining Grand Prix Major status for the Merseyside Open by increasing their cash support. A date for your diary, 6/7th January 2001. Volunteer helpers will be welcome.

We will be using 14 tables for our 'Closed'. Six practice tables will also be available. An entry form is inside this issue. Make sure you use it to enter. If you lose it etc. contact Ken Armson for a replacement.

If you know of interesting snippets of TT news or Club gossip for this column, send them to our Editor. All contributions welcome.

We are seeking advertisers for our magazine to help cover costs and increase number of pages. Can you help via your employer or other source?

Have you visited our League Web site yet on [www.LiverpoolFreereserve.co.uk](http://www.LiverpoolFreereserve.co.uk)? Regular league table updates etc. Closed entry form available.

Our President, Arthur Upton, is making good progress following his heart attack last November, and will shortly be back on the TT scene.

We will be using TSP orange balls at our 'Closed' C'ships. Light refreshments i.e. sandwiches, pasties etc. will be available at the Reception Desk.

We recently held a successful Junior event for non-league players at Picton SC as a lead-in to the setting up of a Junior League in September.

Swearing, hitting the ball away, throwing your bat, banging or kicking the table are disciplinary offences and unfortunately appear to be on the increase in league matches. Whilst we cannot expect unqualified umpires to take action, your Management Committee can deal with any offender reported to them.

**PETER TAYLOR**  
(CADWA TT CLUB)

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DIVISION 1	P	W	D	L	PTS
POLICE	12	12	0	0	103
CADWA	13	12	0	1	97
WSM	17	8	4	5	91
LIV YM	14	7	0	7	77
BATH ST 'A'	14	8	1	5	76
H. HOUSE	14	8	2	4	75
BATH ST	16	8	0	8	74
WSM 'A'	15	7	2	6	72
LIV YM 'A'	15	5	2	8	61
CADWA 'A'	15	2	3	10	58
WATERLOO	15	1	3	11	53
MARCONI	14	1	3	10	49

DIVISION 4	P	W	D	L	PTS
POLICE 'C'	15	15	0	0	128
WSM 'E'	17	13	1	3	113
H. HOUSE 'A'	17	10	2	5	103
M'HULL 'C'	17	9	0	8	82
MANWEB 'B'	15	7	3	5	81
WSM 'F'	17	7	3	7	80
CADWA 'D'	16	5	4	7	75
BATH ST 'E'	15	5	3	7	66
BOO YM 'A'	14	3	3	9	60
WSM 'G'	16	3	3	10	60
W'LOO 'C'	15	5	1	9	55
LINACRE	16	1	1	14	49

DIVISION 2	P	W	D	L	PTS
POLICE 'A'	16	14	1	1	123
FORDS	17	12	1	4	105
MAGHULL	16	13	2	1	105
W'LOO 'A'	16	5	5	6	83
WSM 'B'	16	7	1	8	75
MANWEB 'A'	16	6	0	10	75
M'WEB	15	6	2	7	67
MARCONI 'A'	15	4	3	8	66
POLICE 'B'	15	3	5	7	66
BOOTLE JC	13	6	3	4	62
BATH ST 'B'	14	2	2	10	53
MARCONI 'B'	15	0	3	12	42

DIVISION 5	P	W	D	L	PTS
M'WEB 'C'	12	11	1	0	107
AIGBURTH	15	11	0	4	101
BATH ST 'F'	13	9	1	3	78
LIV YM 'C'	12	7	2	3	64
A'BRTH 'A'	14	5	3	6	56
M'HULL 'D'	10	2	2	7	40
HOPE	9	3	1	5	38
BATH ST 'G'	10	2	1	7	38
H,HOUSE 'B'	10	2	1	7	34
POLICE 'D'	12	0	0	12	26

DIVISION 3	P	W	D	L	PTS
LIV YM 'B'	17	12	2	3	109
BATH ST 'D'	16	11	3	2	105
BOO JC 'A'	15	10	2	3	99
BATH ST 'C'	16	11	1	4	97
BOOTLE YM	16	9	2	5	85
W'LOO 'B'	17	4	4	9	79
CADWA 'C'	17	4	5	8	78
CADWA 'B'	16	5	5	6	73
WSM 'C'	16	5	2	9	73
M'HULL 'A'	16	4	5	7	65
M'HULL 'B'	16	3	1	12	58
WSM 'D'	16	2	2	12	49