

LONDON BANKS AND CIVIL SERVICE TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE BULLETIN 11

AS AT 28 JANUARY 2024

| | P | W | D | F | A | B | P |
|------------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| COMETS A | 9 | 6 | 3 | 71 | 19 | 27 | 98 |
| CASTAWAYS | 9 | 5 | 3 | 58 | 32 | 27 | 85 |
| COMETS B | 8 | 6 | 2 | 55 | 25 | 21 | 76 |
| NAT WEST | 9 | 3 | 2 | 42 | 48 | 27 | 69 |
| MORPETH A | 8 | 3 | 2 | 41 | 39 | 24 | 65 |
| PRO | 9 | 2 | 3 | 38 | 52 | 27 | 65 |
| NORDWEST | 9 | 1 | 0 | 24 | 66 | 27 | 51 |
| GOOD KARMA | 9 | 1 | 1 | 21 | 69 | 27 | 48 |

Bonus points shown in penultimate column. Ultimate column shows total points from sets won and bonuses

THINGS TO NOTE

- Individual match details can be found on the website at

https://www.tabletennis365.com/LondonBanksAndCivilService/Fixtures/Active_Season_23-24/Division_One

- Check out the photos on the front page of the website under Featured Photos. Is your team there?

COMMENTARY

Week 15

First match this week sees Karma take on Morpeth. This has been a challenging season for Karma whereas Morpeth sit comfortable in mid-table. Karma are fielding Schmidt, Zhao and Sanders. Morpeth have Alnak, Brown and, for the first time this season, Oleg Blyuss. The first set proves to be a cracker! Adam Alnak takes the first two ends from Peter Schmidt and looks to be on course to win the third end too. But Peter manages to stave off defeat, hanging on to win the end 11-9. Sometimes inexplicable things happen on the table tennis table and that was the case here. Having looked down and out a few moments ago, Schmidt reels off point after point after point, winning the fourth end 11-1 and the deciding end 11-3!! Where did that come from?? Extraordinary win! Things calmed down in the second set as Duncan Brown beat Xavier Zhao for the loss of a single end. Two more quick sets followed. First, George Sanders beat Blyuss and then Alnak beat Zhao. Both “no fuss” wins. In set five, Schmidt got the better of Blyuss, losing the first end before winning the next three. The next set proved to be crucial to the match outcome. George Sanders and Duncan Brown were locked at two ends each. They still could not be separated at 10-10 in the fifth. Six more points were needed to establish the winner. And that winner was Sanders by 14-12! 103 points they had battled out and Brown had won 54 of them but lost the set! That took the match score to 4-2 in Karma’s favour, on the verge of their second win of the season. Morpeth then struck back. Blyuss beat Zhao to make it 4-3. Alnak managed to get the better of Sanders and it’s 4-4. Duncan Brown had a good week last week and it fell to him to take down Peter Schmidt for Morpeth to stay on course for the victory. First end to Duncan, but second end to Peter. The third end could have gone either way but it was Duncan who squeezed in front 12-10. The fourth end was even closer! Do you remember all those close matches that Peter lost at the start of the season? Well, it happened again as Duncan managed to come home in front 15-13! Morpeth had come from 4-2 down to 5-4 up! At this point the table tennis Gods granted Karma a miracle as the Sanders/Schmidt combination defeated Alnak and Brown, securing their first doubles win of the season, and the draw! Good effort from Karma, so desperately close to a win!!

Nordwest’s debut match in the First Division was against Nat West and they went down 8-2. In the reverse fixture the Northwest team was unaltered – Nelson, Stair and Francis - but Nat West replaced Tony Catt with Gareth Jones who was joined by Chris Herbert and Adam Johnson. Nelson against Johnson was one of the closer matches in the first half fixture and that was the set with which this contest began. It proved to be a seesaw encounter. Rhyan wins the first end only for Adam to take the next two. Rhyan wins the fourth end to square the

match. The fifth end was close. Adam has only lost a couple of sets all season and he maintained his winning form, taking the decider 11-9. Chris Herbert then opened Nat West's account with a win over Grace Stair in four ends, though the scores suggest the win was far from straightforward. Albert Francis versus Gareth Jones followed and I thought Albert would have the upper hand. How wrong I was as Gareth took the first two ends, survived a dip in the third end, and went on to win the fourth 11-5. In the next set, Johnson was too strong for Stair and Nat West were a healthy 4-0 up. Northwest then got on the board with a Rhyan Nelson win over Jones. It fell to Albert Francis to continue Northwest's revival, taking on Chris Herbert. Things were going well for Albert who was in front after three ends. He had an excellent chance to win the set in the fourth but Chris just managed to hold on for a 12-10 victory. With hindsight that loss of the fourth end proved crucial for Albert and he could never establish a lead thereafter, Chris winning the decider 11-6. If that was a disappointment for Northwest, the next set restored some confidence as Grace Stair managed to beat Gareth Jones in four. It's 5-2 to Nat West. The last two singles sets were shared. Adam Johnson got the better of Albert Francis while Rhyan Nelson delivered a commanding performance to blow away Chris Herbert, losing just 15 points. The evening ended on a high note for Northwest as Francis and Nelson beat Johnson and Jones 11-8 in the fifth. A good doubles win (to add to last week's doubles win against Comets B). The outcome was 6-4 to Nat West. A better result for Northwest than in the first half. Had Northwest won the two sets that went to five, even a match win might have been on the cards!

Over the years PRO have never been able to do much damage to Comets A and winning two or three sets is probably the extent of their ambition. This time Ronnie Turner steps down for PRO in favour of a teammate of his from the Romford league, Oliver Pink. Oliver joined up with John Crawford – who's on an unbeaten streak of nine sets - and George Buck. Comets A turned out Steve Fagan, Laikram Persaud and Winston Wong. Comets started well. Fagan was too strong for Crawford as was Wong in a three straight win over Buck. No "easing him in gently" for Oliver Pink as his first opponent was the redoubtable Laikram Persaud. Laikram was in his usual form, conceding just 13 points in his comfortable win. Steve Fagan then beat Buck and Comets were 4-0 up and all three straight. Crawford faced Persaud and had the audacity to take the first end off him 12-10. Was an upset on the cards? It didn't take long to get an answer as Laikram rattled through the next three ends, winning them all and conceding a stingy 11 points! Set six saw a change of fortune for PRO as Oliver Pink was going point for point with Winston Wong. The score reached two ends each. Into the final end and Oliver's holding his own. He leads 6-2, but Winston slowly catches up until he's 7-6 in front. Oliver breaks Winston's run of points and the score moves to 7-7, 8-7 and 9-7 in Oliver's favour. Last chance for Winston. But Oliver held on to claim the victory 11-7. Good win! Comets quickly got back to winning ways with wins for Persaud over Buck and Fagan over Pink. It's 7-1 to Comets and PRO's last chance of a singles win lay with John Crawford against Winston Wong. Students of history may remember that this League was formed 1993. Say you've been playing the same opponent every now and again over the life of the League and you've never beaten that opponent. Well, that's exactly the position John Crawford finds himself in when facing Winston Wong! Time for John to have another go! The set didn't last long. Finished three straight. And, in a triumph for the optimists among you, was won by John Crawford!! Give that man a pat on the back! That made the match score 7-2 to Comets and a doubles win ensured Comets A took eight points from the match. A loss for PRO but nevertheless a night where they come away fairly happy with the outcome.

Last match of the week is a clash at the top of the table between Castaways and Comets B. A familiar looking team played for Castaways: LeMilliere, Bispham and McKee. Comets B chop and change their players and they put out three players who'd never played together. Kevin Fang we've met before – just one loss this season. Greg Gargrupe, playing up from their Division 2 team. And, a new name, Zach Martillo. Who he? Let's put it this way. Fang took all three off Castaways in the first half and Martillo is stronger than Fang. Doesn't look good for Castaways! A positive start for Castaways as McKee takes the first end off Fang. The positivity rapidly disappeared as Fang took the second 11-3 and went on to take the third and fourth ends comfortably. Martillo then faces LeMilliere. Will Neil's style trouble the new boy? Didn't have to wait long for the answer as Martillo cruised to a three straight win. Next, Johnny Bispham faced Gargrupe and posted a clinical three straight victory. Bispham didn't play in the first half fixture against Comets B so this was his first sight of Kevin Fang. I thought this would be close but Kevin seized the upper hand from the outset and stayed in front for all three ends. If Castaways are going to have any chance of win this Terry McKee has got to beat Zach Martillo. After two tight ends – both of which ended at deuce – it's looking good for Terry. The third sees the start of a Martillo revival as Zach wins it 11-4. And it continued that way with Zach slowly reeling Terry in to win the fourth and fifth ends comfortably. Whatever change Zach made in that third end it certainly worked! Martillo went on to beat Bispham three straight and Castaways are 4-1 down. LeMilliere against Fang was next up and proved to be the

best set of the night. The first two ends were shared. The third end might have gone either way but it went to Neil 11-9. The fourth end was similarly close and Neil was within a couple of points of winning it but fell short as Kevin came home 12-10. And that was where Neil’s chance ended. Kevin got out in front in the deciding end and never looked back to claim an 11-7 in the fifth victory. 106 points contested which shows how close it was! Greg Gargrupe put up a strong fight against Terry McKee but went down in four ends. Not much was going well for Castaways and they took another setback as Gargrupe hit through LeMilliere. Nine singles sets contested and Castaways had won just two of them. The doubles brought some consolation for Castaways. They looked on the brink of defeat being two ends to one down and facing match points in the fourth. They managed to save those match points. That proved decisive and Castaways ran away with the fifth surprisingly easily. So, a 7-3 win for Comets B. That result opens up the race for second place but ironically strengthens Comets A’s grip on the title!

RICHARD CAMPBELL
DIVISIONAL SECRETARY
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AVERAGES (Qualification: ≥ 11 sets played)

| Player | Team | Sets Won | Sets Played | Average (%) |
|------------|------------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Yi | MORPETH A | 12 | 12 | 100.0 |
| Fang | COMETS B | 11 | 12 | 91.7 |
| Persaud | COMETS A | 19 | 21 | 90.5 |
| Johnson | NAT WEST | 16 | 18 | 88.9 |
| Francis | COMETS A | 13 | 15 | 86.7 |
| Adesanya | COMETS B | 15 | 18 | 83.3 |
| Luu | COMETS B | 10 | 12 | 83.3 |
| S Fagan | COMETS A | 11 | 15 | 73.3 |
| C Fagan | COMETS A | 15 | 21 | 71.4 |
| Bispham | CASTAWAYS | 17 | 24 | 70.8 |
| Crawford | PRO | 16 | 24 | 66.7 |
| McKee | CASTAWAYS | 8 | 12 | 66.7 |
| LeMilliere | CASTAWAYS | 17 | 27 | 63.0 |
| Turner | PRO | 14 | 24 | 58.3 |
| To | MORPETH A | 7 | 15 | 46.7 |
| Nelson | NORDWEST | 12 | 27 | 44.4 |
| Brown | MORPETH A | 8 | 18 | 44.4 |
| Sanders | GOOD KARMA | 5 | 12 | 41.7 |
| Samuels | NAT WEST | 6 | 15 | 40.0 |
| Alnak | MORPETH A | 7 | 18 | 38.9 |
| Herbert | NAT WEST | 7 | 18 | 38.9 |
| Schmidt | GOOD KARMA | 8 | 21 | 38.1 |
| Francis | NORDWEST | 7 | 27 | 25.9 |
| Persaud | PRO | 3 | 12 | 25.0 |
| Jones | NAT WEST | 3 | 21 | 14.3 |
| Miller | GOOD KARMA | 2 | 15 | 13.3 |
| Stair | NORDWEST | 2 | 21 | 9.5 |
| Zhao | GOOD KARMA | 1 | 15 | 6.7 |