

LONDON BANKS AND CIVIL SERVICE TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE BULLETIN 06

AS AT 27 NOVEMBER 2021

	P	W	D	F	A	B	P
COMETS	4	4	0	34	6	12	46
MORPETH A	4	3	1	28	12	12	40
NAT WEST	4	1	2	20	20	12	32
PRO	5	0	1	15	35	15	30
CASTAWAYS	3	1	1	17	13	9	26
GOOD KARMA	3	0	1	9	21	9	18
OUTCASTS	3	1	0	7	23	9	16

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_21-22/Division_One

COMMENTARY

Week 6

This week opens with Morpeth taking on Nat West. Robertson, Bekele and Blyuss versus Chris Herbert, Gareth Jones and, for the first time this season, Chris Penrose. Should be a close match. Faced with this situation what often makes the difference is unexpected wins. First set of the night sees Robertson play Herbert. I don't think these guys have ever faced each other before. Not much to go on but my money's on Chris but, of the two of them, I suspect Matt has played a lot more table tennis so far this season. First end is close but it's Matt who edges it 11-9. Second end follows the same pattern and with the same outcome - 11-8 to Matt and my prediction's not looking good. Third end and I've got it wrong again as Matt sails home 11-8. An impressive three straight win. What did I say about unexpected wins being vital? Next set pits the best player in each team against each other – Bekele versus Penrose. We don't see much of Chris in this league, he's mostly playing in Basildon, but in his half a dozen appearances each season, he rarely loses. That said, he does have a previous loss to Bekele in his record. I'm making no predictions! In the first two ends there wasn't much between them but both went to Penrose, 11-9 on each occasion. Third end and Samson's got to make his push now or it's all over. Again, it's close but it proves to be too big a mountain for Samson to climb and Penrose takes the third end 11-6 and with it the set. Good win from a man clearly in form! The next two sets went Morpeth's way. Blyuss beat Jones and Bekele beats Herbert – both in four ends. The fifth set proved to be another seesaw contest, rather like those we saw last week. Gareth Jones makes a strong start and takes the first two ends from Robertson and looks well on his way to victory. Fortune then swung Matt's way as he takes the next two: 11-6 and 11-2. So now we have a contest! May be that fourth end runaway score made the difference as Matt takes the final end 11-7! A fighting come-from-behind win for Matt but tough luck on Gareth. That was followed by comfortable victories for Penrose over Blyuss and Bekele over Jones. Morpeth take a 5-2 lead in the match. The next set – Blyuss against Herbert – started with a long 17-15 end going in Oleg's favour. Chris then comes back with an 11-9 win in the second end. The third end sees Oleg nose in front, taking it 11-5. The fourth end required both players to raise their game, but neither could gain a significant advantage and deuce appeared inevitable. They couldn't be separated at 10-10, or at 11-11! These are the sorts of situation where it's often harder being a spectator than a player! Finally, a tiny gap emerged and it was Chris who just edged home 13-11 to square the set. The fifth end repeated the fourth as the players stayed locked together until 10-10 was reached again. Whatever happens now you've got to feel sorry for the loser! Who was it that came out the winner? It was Chris Herbert 14-12 in the fifth!! An excellent attack versus defence contest that we regrettably see so few of nowadays. 118 points were involved – the season's longest by miles. The win was Chris's but, not wishing to rub salt in Oleg's wound, he actually won 60 of those points to Chris's 58! That is the third-longest set in the league's history. The never-to-be-emulated longest ever set spanned 130 points, all five ends finishing at deuce!! Nat West continued their

fightback and took the last two sets to secure a draw. An excellent match played in the best spirit. Chris Penrose was Player of the Match, winning all three and dropping a single end (to Matt Robertson).

Castaways bring in Terry McKee and Johnny Bispham for their match against Karma. Karma too had a newcomer – Bing Siah – in their team, joining familiar names Sanders and Zhao. It's taken me all week to remember where I've come across Bing Siah's name but I've dredged it out of the memory banks – he played a few seasons for Treasury in this league about ten years ago and now plays in Div. 3 of the Central League! Castaways started at pace and took all three of the first round of sets. George Sanders took an end off McKee and Siah did the same to LeMilliere but that was all Karma had to show for it. Set four was a lot closer as Bispham took on Sanders. After three ends, Sanders was up by 2 sets to one. It's looking good for George in the fourth end but Bispham steals it at the very end, emerging an 11-9 winner. At that point things turned against Sanders and Bispham motored through the deciding end to take the set 11-6. McKee came out against Siah in the set that followed. McKee soon found himself in all sorts of trouble losing the first two ends and the third end not going his way. Siah held a handful of match points in that third end but Terry saved them all to run out a 12-10 winner. You had to be there to experience the undulating nature of the fourth end! With the score at 10-10 the winner is usually in sight but not in this contest. The exchanges at deuce went on and on and on, past 16-16 the previous longest end of the season and it was 19-19 before the contest was resolved. The winner proved to be Bing Siah, taking the end by 21-19 and with it the set! Commiserations to Terry McKee for a really hard fight. If there was a record for most match points saved, Terry probably now holds it. Was that 21-19 outcome the longest end of all time? No, it wasn't. The record for the longest single end has stood since 2008 – no record has stood for longer. In an extraordinary coincidence, the person who holds that record was the loser in this match! The holder is Terry McKee who beat Kenneth Ho of Credex 23-21 in November 2008! The drama didn't stop there. Neil LeMilliere suddenly found himself in trouble and two ends down to Xavier Zhao. Neil had to dig deep to get back in the match but he managed that, taking the next two ends. He'd have every right for thinking how has this gone to five, given Xavier won just 14 points the last time they played! The fifth end might have gone either way but Neil managed to stay just in front to win 11-8. An unexpectedly close contest! This unpredictable match continued to surprise as the last three singles sets were all one sided and finished three straight in no time at all. First, Bispham made light work of Siah, conceding just 11 points, then LeMilliere had no difficulty with Sanders, dropping just 16 points and finally McKee beat Zhao for the loss of 13 points. And, in a final twist, a doubles that should have been easy for Castaways turned out to be anything but, as Karma pushed them all the way but lost 12-10 in the fifth. The final score was 8-2 to Castaways but one of those matches that, looking back at the night's events, leaves you scratching your head. It's a funny old game!

The final match of the week is PRO against Comets. You'd have to think that PRO will be hard pressed to get much out of this. Team selection didn't help as Comets brought three players who had dropped just two sets between them all season – Fung, Persaud and Fagan. Going to be an early night?? First set and John Crawford is up against Steve Fagan. Steve wins the first two ends but John comes back to just take the third end 13-11. Is the tide turning? Unfortunately, not for John, as Fagan eases through the fourth end to win it 11-8. The next three sets became a bit of a procession. Comets won all of them three straight, rarely conceding more than six points in any end. The fifth set was going the same way, Perry Fung took the first two ends from Crawford though John had good chances in both. Then, a glimmer of hope, as John wins the third end 11-9. The glimmer shone a bit brighter at the end of the fourth which John won 11-8. All square. Ok, so what do we think? Is Perry just toying with him and will now pull away or does John really have a chance? The record book gives John no comfort – in the last five years Perry has never to lost to anyone outside the top ten of the averages. Into the deciding end and, against the odds, John leads 8-4. That becomes 10-8 in John's favour and we have a big upset on our hands. But Perry's not done yet and he pulls it back to 10-10. We've all been in this situation and it's hard not to think you've blown it. This is all about keeping your nerve. Two points later and he's done it! John wins 12-10 in the fifth. That must be a strong candidate for upset win of the season, alongside George Sanders' defeat of Laikram Persaud. After that, Comets returned to their winning ways, reeling off the remaining five sets with minimal drama. High points for PRO were Crawford taking an end off Persaud and George Buck nearly taking an end off Fung but, in a week of long ends, frustratingly losing 19-17.

Another week of strong competition and individual heroics. We may have fewer teams this year but it's throwing up some great contests! But you sense Comets are gaining a stranglehold on the title – just look at the averages!

AVERAGES (Qualification: ≥4 sets played)

Player	Team	Sets Won	Sets Played	Average (%)
Catt	NAT WEST	6	6	100.0
Persaud	COMETS	8	9	88.9
Wong	COMETS	8	9	88.9
Fagan	COMETS	5	6	83.3
Francis	COMETS	5	6	83.3
Fung	COMETS	5	6	83.3
Harris	CASTAWAYS	5	6	83.3
Bekele	MORPETH A	8	10	80.0
Blyuss	MORPETH A	5	8	62.5
LeMilliere	CASTAWAYS	5	8	62.5
Robertson	MORPETH A	4	7	57.1
Crawford	PRO	8	15	53.3
Muller	NAT WEST	4	9	44.4
Sanders	GOOD KARMA	4	9	44.4
Turner	PRO	5	15	33.3
Guimichev	OUTCASTS	2	6	33.3
Herbert	NAT WEST	2	6	33.3
Link	GOOD KARMA	2	6	33.3
Jones	NAT WEST	2	12	16.7
Roullier	OUTCASTS	1	6	16.7
Zhao	GOOD KARMA	1	9	11.1