

Veteran campaigner Steve Kerns produced one of the biggest shocks in the recent history of the Braintree Table Tennis League when he beat the holder and hot favourite Paul Davison to win the men's singles.

Davison had won the title five times in six attempts and had never tasted defeat in a final while Kerns had been without a win for ten years.

It is normally Davison who rises to the occasion while Kerns has often failed to produce his best on finals night.

On Sunday that went into reverse. Kerns' shots that might have gone off in previous years were finding the table while Davison looked increasingly tentative and careless.

A Davison of past years would surely not have seen two match points slip away as they did in the fourth game here.

He led by two games to one and 10-8, but could not find the killer ball and Kerns pulled back to take the set to a final game, which he won at 11-8.

The shocks were not limited to the final.

After the withdrawal of No.2 seed Kevin Gowlett (work commitments) and equal No.3 Peter Hayden (injured), there was a chance for some of the league's lower ranked players to shine and it was expected that semi final places would be on offer to the two No.5 seeds whose progress might have been halted by the absentees.

But Scott Dowsett was beaten by his teammate Simon Webber and Ian Whiteside by Ken Lewis, who became the first player from outside the top division to reach a semi final since Trevor Vincent in 1976.

Lewis did not make much impression on Kerns in the semi final, but Webber gave a taste of things to come when he stretched Davison to five games.

For Kerns, though, it was a night of triumph. Not only did he become the oldest player ever to win men's title - his fourth, to place him equal fifth on the all-time list behind Terry Dowsett, Davison, Hayden and Tony Guy - but he added the veterans' singles, with victory in the final over Whiteside, and the over 50s singles in his first year in that age group, where he beat Steve Pennell.

It was a good night too for Steve Noble, whose unorthodox gently persuasive style brought him the restricted singles, with a final victory over Dave Parker, and the division two singles, where he beat Sean Clift.

Eleven-year-old William Bettley became the youngest ever winner of the junior boys' singles.

He was tested by the Matthew Laws' steady solid game but was not afraid to go for his shots on both wings and showed admirable composure to pull back when a game looked like getting away from him.

Bettley also won the cadets' singles with a victory over his brother Alexander and the two paired up to take the junior doubles. Alexander took first place in the under 11 singles with youngest brother James runner-up.

Lydia Jackson took the girls' singles with a victory at 14-12 in the fifth game against last year's winner Mia Charles.

Ryan Pitt took the division one singles, with a final win over Lee McHugh, but McHugh, in his first season in the league, took the handicap singles, with a win over Parker in the final.

Charles Wilkinson triumphed in the division three singles with a win over Adam Clift.

Paul Davison's one consolation came in the men's doubles, which he and Kevin Gowlett won for the sixth time in seven years. They beat Pennell and Whiteside in the final.

Finals night results:

Men's singles final: Steve Kerns beat Paul Davison 7-11, 11-6, 8-11, 13-11, 11-8.

Semi finals: Kerns beat Ken Lewis 11-4, 14-12, 11-6; Davison beat Simon Webber 9-11, 3-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-8.

Men's doubles: Davison and Kevin Gowlett beat Steve Pennell and Ian Whiteside 11-2, 11-8, 11-8.

Veterans' singles: Kerns beat Whiteside 13-11, 11-6, 11-3

Junior boys' singles: William Bettley beat Matthew Laws 11-9, 11-5, 12-10.

Over 50s singles: Kerns beat Steve Pennell 6-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-6.

Restricted singles: Steve Noble beat Dave Parker 4-11, 11-9, 11-7, 11-7.

Division one singles: Ryan Pitt beat Lee McHugh 11-5, 11-9, 4-11, 13-11.

Division two singles: Noble beat Sean Clift 11-7, 11-8, 11-9.

Division three singles: Charles Wilkinson beat Adam Clift 11-3, 11-6, 10-12, 11-7.

Events decided before finals night:

Handicap doubles: Jamie Brooks and James Mullane beat Kerns and Martin Wells.

Handicap singles: McHugh beat Parker

Cadets singles: William Bettley beat Alexander Bettley

Under 11 singles: Alexander Bettley beat James Bettley

Girls' singles: Lydia Jackson beat Mia Charles

Junior doubles: Alexander and William Bettley beat Brooks and Laws

Most promising boy: Patrick Bugg

Most promising girls: Beatrice Jackson

Coaching award: Oliver Hughes

Martin Bawden award for service or achievement: William Bettley