**League Report**

**Courier, 27th January, 2017**

Third placed Free Church A had a close encounter in their Division 1 clash against struggling St Georges A, emerging as 6-4 winners. Sam Weaving was in fine form winning his three and Tom Brocklehurst and Sam Wiggins added singles with the two Sams combining for the doubles. However, Georges were always in it with Matt Jordan posting 2 and singles from Damon Fenton and Gary Jackson. Another struggling side, County Council A overcame Nomads A, who languish in last position, 8-2. Chris Brewer and Pat McCabe were maximum men, Phil Paine added one and won the doubles with Brewer, but could not defeat Simon Nolan nor Paul Rowan. Top side Rugby A whitewashed Free Church B, Ryan Lines, Adrian Pilgrim and Ryan Stockham compiling the points. Fourth placed St Georges B beat Phoenix 7-3 when Mark Jackson and Ron Vose notched all of their points. Paul Calloway, Callum Martin and Mark Rose all enjoyed single victories.

In Division 2 Free Church D went top after an 8-2 success at Millennium A. Ricardo Bolanos maintained his perfect record, and won the doubles with Chris Blowey who, like Lewis Singleton, won twice. Christian Ward scored the home team’s points. Title favourites Whitnash A turned up a player short at Free Church C. With Nikit Sajiv defeating Kevin Ariss it meant the visitors squeezed home 6-4 (Mark Woolerton 3, Ariss 2 and the doubles). Two of the bottom three clashed with St Georges C edging Eathorpe A 6-4, thanks mainly to Brian Aston’s treble. Len Coonan provided two more points and Kevin Finn one. Bernard Reman nailed two for the villagers plus the doubles with Pete Titmas, who won once. This left St Georges D at the foot of the table after Enigmas beat them 8-2. Steve Proctor secured a hat-trick, Charlie Somerton and Malc Macfarlane braces and Proctor/ Somerton won the doubles. Andy Caine and Richard Grover avoided the whitewash. Free Church C pipped their E side 6-4 despite Mark Bolshaw’s fine hat-trick. Anthony Smith earned a point but C took the win with a pair of wins from Jeff and Tom Harris, who also won the doubles, and a win from Michael Ho.

First played second in Division 3 with County Council D taking a 6-4 win against their C side. Mark Freeman won his singles and the doubles with Cliff Jackson who won two. Steve Poole kept C in contention with a double and Derek Harwood and Doug Lowe chipped in with singles. Free Church H escaped the relegation spots with a fine 7-3 win at Rugby D. Emily Beasley was the heroine with a maximum and Jerry Simmons and Jenny Singleton each tasted victory twice. Harvey and Steve Fowler took singles in reply and Harvey joined Oliver Fowler to take the doubles. Rugby F (Bradley Matthews 3, Jack Evans 2, Ian Evans 1) enjoyed their derby with Rugby E ( Stuart Mills 2, Dave Cox 1, Cox/Mills the doubles) slightly the better after their 6-4 win. Whitnash B could yet emerge as promotion candidates and pulled off a 7-3 success over Free Church G. Dennis Woodhead was unbeaten, Greg Swan won two, the pair combining for the doubles, and Roger Palmer notched one. Ged Kuprys (2) and Eve Briscoe (1) responded.

The top two sides clashed in Division 4, sharing the honours. Free Church J’s 5 points came courtesy of Mike Weaving (2), Janice Rowan (1) and Jill Weaving (1) with Mike and Janice winning the doubles. Free Church I forced the stalemate through Nick Darwen (2), Kate Singleton (2) and Chris Jones (1). Challengers Eathorpe C took full advantage in their derby fixture with their D team. Jamie Sayer and Norbu Sunang-Joret accounted for 7 points and Joe Hunt provided one, losing to Paul Deavall and Shaun Martin. Free Church K have been in inspired form of late. They overcame Rugby G 9-1 , Darren Laffey (3), Richard Pittaway (3), Mark Singleton (2) plus the doubles with Grace Newman taking a consolation and they followed this up with a 7-3 triumph at County Council E (Laffey 3, Pittaway 2, Singleton 1 plus the doubles). Jason Grey, William Hung and Carl Morgan all notched wins in reply.

Autumn champions Free Church M began their defence of the Division A title 5-0 against Flavels B. Robbie Fitchford and Milan Sajiv were in no mood to slip. The two promoted sides faced each other with Free Church P squeezing home 3-2 at Rugby H. Josh Yarrow (2) and Milly Green (1) ensured victory whilst Angel Chen (1 and the doubles with brother William) kept it tight.

In Division B FISSC A got off to a fine start with a 5-0 eclipse of Ashorne A. Mark Kingham and Brian Marston were the men in form. Relegated Free Church N put themselves on the road for a return when beating Free Church O 4-1. Keith Knott bagged two and the doubles with Ashley Knott who won once. Jay Virdi spoilt the party.

Free Church T edged Free Church S 3-2 in Division C despite Eve Briscoe winning her two singles. Ben Holding and Tom Yarrow both won singles and combined for the crucial doubles.

In Division F Eathorpe I showed their credentials with a 4-1 victory over Free Church V. Chris Roberts won twice, Joshua Cope once and the pair grabbed the doubles. Owain Jones replied. Free Church U got home 3-2 when playing Free Church W despite Erin Darwen winning both singles. David Knott and debutant Harvey Wilson had a win each and triumphed in the doubles.

**Lillington Free Church TTC Junior British League 2016/17 Weekend 2, 21/22 January 2017**

The Junior Boys team from Lillington Free Church, sponsored by Leamington IT solutions provider NS Optimum, once again made the trip up the M1 to Derby to take part in the Junior British League on 21st/22nd January. After the first of the two weekends of competition, Lillington were placed fifth in the six-team Division 2B with relegation facing the side who finished bottom.



Lillington’s first match of the weekend was against table-topping Halton – no tougher start was possible. Number 1, Timmy Cooper found himself 2-0 down against Halton’s number 2, Connor Whitehead but managed to get in front and pull a leg back. Finding his range and moving his opponent about, Cooper also took the following two legs to put Lillington 1-0 up in the match.

Adam Cofler then faced Halton’s top player, Keir Morton, and was blown away in the first leg, before recovering a little in the second and going on to take the fourth 11-9. A lightning start in the fourth by Morton set the tone and he never looked back, cruising through to level the match.

Jack Green stepped in to the court for Lillington and got an early lead against Harry Watson, before Watson started to steadily peg him back, ultimately nicking the leg 11-9. This was followed by an 11-7 and an 11-6 leg, sending Halton 2-1 up in the match.

From there, it was relatively plain sailing for the top side. Cooper looked sharp in taking the first leg against Morton, but could manage no more, and with Green and Cofler losing to Whitehead and Watson respectively, the match ended in a 5-1 defeat.

*Lillington FC JBL squad members (L-R) Jack Green, Timmy Cooper, Adam Cofler and Lewis Singleton.*

Green kicked things off in the match against Kingfisher and looked in good form during the first leg against number 1, Reece Chamdal. Chamdal managed to claw himself level at the death and take the first leg 12-10. Green struggled to put Chamdal under pressure in the second leg and although he returned to his first leg form in the third, the game slipped away 3-0.

It was a similar story for Cooper, who wasn’t able to put opponent Jamie Liu under enough pressure and lost in straight sets, but Lewis Singleton, making his first appearance of the weekend, looked sharp against Joshua Gallen. The players shared the first two legs, but it was Gallen who took the following two.

Cooper lost in four close sets against Chamdal, and Green and Lewis in straight sets against Gallen and Liu. A 6-0 reverse for the second match of the weekend.

Market Rasen were the final opponents on Saturday and with them in second place trying to chase down Halton, they were in no mood to hang around. They rattled off the first three games in straight sets, with Dylan Curry beating Cooper, Sam Chesterman beating Cofler and Tom McIntosh beating Singleton.

The Lillington lads kept fighting, though. Cooper (v Chesterman), Singleton (v Curry) and Cofler (v Mcintosh) all went to four, but with all on the wrong end of the results, the team suffered their second whitewash of the day.

After the results on Saturday, Lillington started Sunday knowing they were just too far adrift of fourth place, so the focus was avoiding bottom place and relegation. First to be faced were the fourth placed Irish Boys and Cooper looked in excellent form as he sped to a 3-0 victory over Art McLaughlin.

Dylan Grace, Dylan Byrne and McLaughlin the put their collective feet down and rattled off the next four games. Grace beat Cofler, Byrne beat Green and Grace returned to the table to beat Cooper in four. McLaughlin accounted for Green, but Cofler overcame a both a first leg and heavy fourth leg defeat to display excellent mettle and beat Byrne deuce in the fifth, limiting the defeat to 4-2 overall.

The final match of the weekend and the season was against bottom-placed Ulster. With Ulster yet to score a point and Lillington on two, a minimum of a draw would guarantee the side avoided relegation. Defeat would leave the two teams tied on two points and the final positions would then be decided based on the number of individual legs won and lost over the whole competition.

Defender, James McGrath, edged Ulster into an early lead with a hard fought win over Green, after which Cooper safely negotiated his way past Matthew Cherry to level.

Singleton was looking confident after levelling at 1-1 against Conor Smith, but the third leg passed him by a little too quickly before Smith took a closer fourth to take the win.

Cooper and McGrath shared the first two legs, both 12-10, but McGrath then got on top and trotted through the next two to move Ulster within one point of victory.

Green came to the table needing to beat Smith to keep the draw alive for Lillington and let an early lead go during the middle of the first leg, losing it 11-8. Green regrouped well and used heavy topspin and the slower ball to great effect, growing in confidence with every point as he took the next three legs to leave the match score at 3-2 to Ulster.

Last to play was Singleton, needing to beat Cherry to grasp a draw. Unfortunately for Lillington it wasn’t to be and Cherry put in a fine performance, taking the game 3-0 and earning Ulster a 4-2 win.

With that last match defeat, Lillington and Ulster were tied on points. Although the Lillington lads had undoubtedly found it tough, their ability to extend their opponents to four and five legs in defeat over the two weekends proved decisive and they ended up avoiding relegation by virtue of this.

Halton finished the competition as champions with 19 out of a possible 20 points. Market Rasen were runners-up on 15, with Kingfisher just pipping Irish Boys to third (both 11 points).

With Lillington losing two of their top juniors this year as they moved into the senior ranks, it was always likely to be a hard season. In a strong looking division, inexperience at this level did them no favours, but the younger members of the squad will have learnt plenty. With relegation avoided, thoughts will now turn to improving before next season.

The club would like to extend a huge thank you to their sponsors, NS Optimum, with their kind donation helping to reduce costs to the players involved.

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*Lillington FC JBL squad members (L-R) Jack Green, Timmy Cooper, Adam Cofler and Lewis Singleton.*