

LONDON BANKS AND CIVIL SERVICE TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE BULLETIN 8

AS AT 24 DECEMBER 2023

	P	W	D	F	A	B	P
CASTAWAYS	7	4	3	48	22	21	69
COMETS A	6	3	3	43	17	18	61
NAT WEST	7	2	1	31	39	21	52
PRO	7	2	2	31	39	21	52
MORPETH A	6	3	1	33	27	18	51
COMETS B	5	3	2	32	18	15	47
GOOD KARMA	6	1	0	16	44	18	34
NORDWEST	6	1	0	16	44	18	34

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 10

First match of the week brings together two teams who've yet to win this season. It's Northwest against Karma. Miller, Link and new name Aman Kanwar for Karma and Nelson, Francis and Stair for Northwest. The first set proves to be quite a contest! Michael Miller takes an early lead against Rhyan Nelson, winning both the first two ends. Rhyan fights back to take the third end 11-5. That proved to be the turning point for Rhyan who never looked back from that moment, taking the next two ends comfortably. A good come-from-behind victory for Rhyan and Northwest are 1-0 up. The next set followed a similar pattern but in reverse. Grace Stair wins the first end against Ben Link only to lose the next three ends and the match is all-square. That brings Kanwar to the table, a player we've not seen in this division before but who's a regular for Karma B in the second division. Aman is therefore very familiar with promotees Northwest. His first set, against Albert Francis, looks to be an uphill battle as Albert beat him twice last season. Unfortunately, Aman fared no better on this occasion, losing three straight. In the next set Nelson got his second win, easing past Ben Link in three. Northwest are 3-1 up and looking good. Two mighty five-end battles followed. Miller again started well, winning the first two ends against Francis. But, just as happened in the set against Nelson, Miller inexplicably fell apart at that point and Francis reeled off three ends to claim the victory. The next set promised to be close. Stair and Kanwar played twice last season and emerged 1-1. Another Karma fast start as both the first two ends go to Aman. Grace comes back to take the next two ends and we need a decider. The final end was indeed close but the winning point belonged to Aman 11-8 in the fifth. Good contest! After that, Francis dispatched Link three straight, Nelson proved too good for Kanwar and Stair made little headway against Miller. That takes the match score to 6-3 to Northwest who added the doubles to celebrate a 7-3 victory and their first win of the season. That means these two teams reach the Xmas break with identical playing records and all to play for in the second half.

The next match is one I've been looking forward to: Comets A against Comets B. The A team field their strongest trio – Cain Fagan, Steve Fagan and Laikram Persaud. The B team have Jamie Mullineaux, Kevin Fang and reserve Adil Islam who plays for Comets C in the second division where he rarely loses. On paper, team selection gives the A team the edge. The match begins with a cracker of a contest! Cain Fagan takes the first two ends from Mullineaux. He gets to within a whisker of winning the third too, before Mullineaux steals it 12-10. Jamie wins the fourth end and the final end goes on and on. It took 105 points to establish the winner. And that winner was Mullineaux who'd looked dead and buried towards the conclusion of the third end. A win snatched

from the jaws of defeat! In an earlier bulletin I asked: “just how good is Kevin Fang?”. Well, after the next set I think the answer has to be “very good” as he brushed aside Steve Fagan comfortably, dropping a single end. 2-0 to the B team and a great start! The A team get on the board in the next set as Persaud was just too strong for Adil Islam. Can Fang do it again as he faces Cain Fagan? He’s looking good after winning the first two ends but hopes revive for Cain as he wins the third. If you think a comeback may be in prospect forget it as Fang produces a totally dominant fourth end to run away with it 11-3. Another good win for Fang! Mullineaux then fought out a hotly contested set against Persaud but Laikram proved to have the edge on the night, winning in four. Steve Fagan brought the match score to 3-3 with a win against Islam. Next came the contest we’ve all been waiting for – Fang against Persaud. I’ve watched Laikram’s results for many years, always near the top of the averages and so hard to beat. This is a big challenge for Fang. After two quiet ends Fang is ahead but we’re waiting for this match to get going. As expected, Laikram makes a big push in the third end but he can’t put daylight between himself and Fang. The score reaches 9-9 and we’ve come to the crescendo. Well, Fang held his nerve to take the next two points and an impressive three straight win! The B team go ahead 4-3. Coin Fagan then beat Islam and we’re at 4-4. Can’t pick a winner. Mullineaux put the B team in front again with an excellent win over Steve Fagan which took four ends, two of which ended at deuce. The A team had to win the doubles to hold for a draw. On a night of hotly contested sets the doubles was surprisingly one sided. A win for the A team in four ends where the B team’s performance rather fell away. So, honours even after an interesting night’s table tennis. Huge pats on the back for Kevin Fang’s maximum against three of the strongest players in the division!

The final match of the week was between PRO and Nat West. Crawford, Buck and Turner against Samuels, Jones and Herbert. First up is Crawford against Samuels. Les starts very positively with an 11-3 win in the first end. John comes back with an equal positive 11-5 win in the second. At that point a potentially close contest swung in Crawford's favour with two comfortable wins to take the set in four. Next came a key set between two players not having the best of seasons: Buck against Jones. Gareth seemed to have cracked it, winning the two opening ends. Momentum then swung in George’s favour as he fought back to win the next two ends. Someone had to be disappointed by the outcome of this close set and it was George, losing the final end 11-7. Gareth stayed on the table to face Crawford but it didn’t last long – three straight to Crawford. Buck then lost to Chris Herbert before Ronnie Turner played his first set, against Les Samuels. Quite a set it turned out to be. Les took the first two ends only for Ronnie to capture the next two. By the final end, Ronnie had found his form and Les was falling away. The seesaw set ended 11-4 in Ronnie’s favour. Ronnie stayed on to beat Jones in three and PRO were 4-2 up. Crawford then fought out another key set, against Chris Herbert. This was a set where patience and concentration were vital, with long pushing rallies. In the end it was Crawford who triumphed but it was the narrowest of victories, it finished in four but three of those ends concluded at deuce. 5-2 to PRO. If Nat West were to draw this match Herbert had to beat Turner. This was another seesaw set. First two ends to Herbert. Third end to Turner. Ronnie dived with death in the fourth end but managed to scrape home 12-10. The final end was close but Chris pulled away to win 11-6. Nat West are still in it! Even more so after set nine with Gareth Jones having no trouble with George Buck. So, it all rests on the doubles. My money’s on PRO but that proved to be money not well spent as Nat West came home in four ends. Nat West had salvaged a draw against the odds, leaving PRO kicking themselves for letting that 5-2 lead slip. A good maximum for John Crawford, his second in two successive weeks.

So, we reach the Xmas break. Castaways are on top. Comets A still look to have the advantage but that advantage has reduced with the last two results. Oddly, Comets B are third from bottom yet they haven’t lost a match yet! And Karma and Northwest are locked together in seventh and eighth places. An interesting second half in prospect!

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AVERAGES (Qualification: ≥ 8 sets played)

Player	Team	Sets Won	Sets Played	Average (%)
Yi	MORPETH A	12	12	100.0
Johnson	NAT WEST	11	12	91.7
Fang	COMETS B	8	9	88.9
Bispham	CASTAWAYS	15	18	83.3
Adesanya	COMETS B	10	12	83.3
Francis	COMETS A	10	12	83.3
Persaud	COMETS A	10	12	83.3
Luu	COMETS B	7	9	77.8
McKee	CASTAWAYS	7	9	77.8
LeMilliere	CASTAWAYS	14	21	66.7
Crawford	PRO	12	18	66.7
S Fagan	COMETS A	8	12	66.7
C Fagan	COMETS A	9	15	60.0
Turner	PRO	12	21	57.1
To	MORPETH A	6	12	50.0
Nelson	NORDWEST	8	18	44.4
Alnak	MORPETH A	5	12	41.7
Samuels	NAT WEST	5	12	41.7
Schmidt	GOOD KARMA	6	15	40.0
Francis	NORDWEST	6	18	33.3
Herbert	NAT WEST	5	15	33.3
Brown	MORPETH A	4	12	33.3
Persaud	PRO	3	9	33.3
Link	GOOD KARMA	2	9	22.2
Miller	GOOD KARMA	2	9	22.2
Zhao	GOOD KARMA	1	9	11.1
Jones	NAT WEST	1	15	6.7
Stair	NORDWEST	1	15	6.7