

AS AT 7 APRIL 2024

	P	W	D	F	A	B	P
COMETS A	14	9	3	108	32	42	150
COMETS B	14	11	3	100	40	36	136
CASTAWAYS	14	9	4	94	46	42	136
NAT WEST	14	5	4	70	70	42	112
MORPETH A	14	5	2	62	75	39	101
PRO	14	4	3	58	82	42	100
NORDWEST	14	2	0	35	105	39	74
GOOD KARMA	14	1	1	30	110	36	66

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 20

Final match of the season. It's Morpeth versus Comets B and this will determine who finishes in second place in the division. Let's remind you of the maths involved. Comets postponed the original fixture and therefore can get no help from bonus points in this match. Comets have to win 10-0 to claim second place outright. A 9-1 win takes them level on points with Castaways but Comets have the better "matches won" record and so finish above Castaways. Any other result and Castaways finish second. So, very little room for Comets to manoeuvre and a tense night ahead with "no slip ups" being the order of the day. Who's going to fight this out? Morpeth remain unchanged – Oleg Blyuss, Chris Alexander and last week's unluckiest player, Duncan Brown. Comets B are taking no chances and field their strongest team – Jamie Mullineaux, Kevin Fang and David Adesanya. Can they do it? The match opener is Mullineaux against Blyuss. The first hurdle is quickly negotiated as Jamie posts a comfortable win. Second up is Fang taking on Brown. Fairly routine first end which Kevin wins 11-7. On to the second end and the fun begins! Duncan is not going down without a fight and the end twists and turns all the way to 10-10. Who can hold their nerve? A series of deuce points ensues where each player seemed to be on the brink of a win, only to be denied. The contest is still unresolved at 15-15 and again at 16-16. At that moment, the same player won two successive points to claim the victory. And that player was Kevin Fang, who's now taken both the first two ends. Huge disappointment for Duncan. More drama in the third end and the players are inseparable at 10-10. The score moves to 11-11 and then 12-12. Surely Duncan won't fall agonisingly short again! But that's unfortunately what happened as Kevin again takes the next two points which gives him the third end and the win. Comets breathe a collective sigh of relief. Adesanya faces Alexander in the third end and manages to just stay in front throughout three ends to claim the win. 3-0 to Comets, so far, so good. From this point on the match progressed out of order as the teams had agreed that David could play his three sets and then leave. Adesanya therefore stayed on for set four to face Duncan Brown. This proved to be the pivotal moment of the match. Two ends were played and Duncan won both of them! But Adesanya comes back from the brink to win the third end convincingly 11-4. The fourth end promised to be a monumental battle but suddenly it wasn't, as point after point goes Duncan's way and he gets over the line 11-5! Excellent win for Duncan, rising above the odds! We've now played four sets, it's 3-1 to Comets, but that last result has removed all of Comets' room for error. Six sets remain and Comets must win every one of them if second place is to be theirs. The pressure just increased! Adesanya stays on to take on Blyuss. This time things went more according to plan and David

completes his night's table tennis with a three straight win. Kevin Fang now faces Chris Alexander and is just too good. Another win for Comets. Mullineaux now up against Brown. The averages say this will be one sided but that takes no account of the situation. A bad game by Mullineaux or another inspired performance from Duncan and it's all over for Comets. Cool heads needed here! Jamie is clearly not going to be phased and delivers a commanding performance in the first end, winning 11-6. Second end and Duncan just can't get a foothold, going down 11-4. Third end and a do or die moment for Duncan. Halfway through the end and Duncan's still in with a chance. But Jamie is not going to blink and comes home 11-8. Three sets remain – might Comets fall at the last hurdle? Set eight and Kevin Fang faces Oleg Blyuss. A great start for Comets as Kevin breezes through the first two ends. But things take an unexpected turn as Oleg salvages the third and fourth ends and, out of the blue, the set is all square. High pressure table tennis in the decider but who will cope with the situation better? We didn't have long to find out as Kevin blasted his way through the final end to win it 11-4! Upset avoided! A valiant effort from Oleg but just falls short. The final singles set sees Mullineaux take on Alexander. Jamie has looked untroubled all night long and he canters home three straight. And so it all comes down to the doubles. The final hurdle for Comets. Comets take the first end with ease. The second end is far closer but Comets manage to pinch it 13-11. But Morpeth are still in this set and they win the third end 11-7. Which way will it go? The fourth is close but it's Comets who win it 11-8! That means the match result is 9-1 to Comets. And with that success, Comets have denied Castaways the second place finish. An excellent contest with which to end the season. Well done to Morpeth for making a fight of it. Congratulations to Comets for staying strong in a pressure match. When they lost that fourth set and when Blyuss staged a comeback in set eight they really were under the cosh. I must single out Jamie Mullineaux as Player of the Match who didn't drop an end and was the spearhead of the Comets' effort.

I'll end with a statistical quirk that I've never seen before in decades of being a Divisional Secretary. Comets B did not lose a single match this season and yet they didn't finish in first place. It's a funny old game!

RICHARD CAMPBELL
DIVISIONAL SECRETARY

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AVERAGES (Qualification: ≥ 17 sets played)

Player	Team	Sets Won	Sets Played	Average (%)
Johnson	NAT WEST	19	21	90.5
Fang	COMETS B	18	21	85.7
Mullineaux	COMETS B	20	24	83.3
Luu	COMETS B	15	18	83.3
C Fagan	COMETS A	27	33	81.8
Adesanya	COMETS B	22	27	81.5
Persaud	COMETS A	29	36	80.6
S Fagan	COMETS A	16	21	76.2
Bispham	CASTAWAYS	25	33	75.8
LeMilliere	CASTAWAYS	28	42	66.7
Loveder	CASTAWAYS	12	18	66.7
Francis	COMETS A	13	21	61.9
Crawford	PRO	22	37	59.5
McKee	CASTAWAYS	10	18	55.6
Turner	PRO	18	34	52.9
Nelson	NORDWEST	18	36	50.0
Herbert	NAT WEST	10	21	47.6
To	MORPETH A	8	18	44.4

Alnak	MORPETH A	10	24	41.7
Samuels	NAT WEST	7	18	38.9
Schmidt	GOOD KARMA	9	24	37.5
Brown	MORPETH A	11	30	36.7
Sanders	GOOD KARMA	6	18	33.3
Francis	NORDWEST	11	36	30.6
Jones	NAT WEST	8	33	24.2
Miller	GOOD KARMA	5	27	18.5
Zhao	GOOD KARMA	3	27	11.1
Stair	NORDWEST	2	30	6.7
Buck	PRO	1	28	3.6