

LONDON BANKS AND CIVIL SERVICE TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE BULLETIN 16

AS AT 16 FEBRUARY 2025

| | P | W | D | F | A | B | P |
|-----------|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|
| COMETS A | 10 | 10 | 0 | 91 | 9 | 30 | 121 |
| MORPETH A | 11 | 9 | 1 | 76 | 34 | 33 | 109 |
| CASTAWAYS | 9 | 5 | 2 | 57 | 33 | 24 | 81 |
| NAT WEST | 10 | 5 | 2 | 51 | 49 | 30 | 81 |
| PRO | 10 | 1 | 2 | 32 | 65 | 30 | 62 |
| COMETS B | 9 | 2 | 1 | 33 | 57 | 27 | 60 |
| COMETS C | 10 | 1 | 1 | 26 | 74 | 30 | 56 |
| OUTCASTS | 9 | 1 | 1 | 21 | 69 | 18 | 39 |

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_24-25/Division_One

- Check out the photos on the front page of the website under Featured Photos. Is your team there?
- Want a trip down memory lane? Every weekly bulletin issued since the 2014-15 season can be found on the first page of the website under the “Div Sec Reports” heading

COMMENTARY

Week 19

First match this week sees Comets A take on Outcasts. This is being played as a double-header with the agreement of both captains. The Comets team is Winston Wong, Ian Francis and Laikram Persaud. Outcasts have Ben Towers, Petko Guimichev and Bing Siah. We start with a bang as Wong and Towers split the first two ends. Winston is having a good season but he can't shake Ben off. Ben wins the third end and comes mighty close to winning the fourth end before Winston stays in the set with a last minute 11-9 steal. At this point both players had won exactly the same number of ends and the same number of points. The deciding end was similarly close and was decided by a narrow three-point margin – a hard fought win for Winston after 93 points played! Set two pitted Ian Francis against Petko Guimichev. This started in the same way as the first set with the first two ends being shared. The third end could have gone in either direction it was so close. The score reached 12-10 before a winner was found – Ian Francis by the skin of his teeth. The fourth end - and it's make or break for Petko. As before, neither player could build a big advantage. The contest ended with an 11-9 win for Ian, making him the winner in four. Coincidentally, both the first two sets have been won by the same three point margin! The third set was a little simpler for Comets. Laikram Persaud steams through Bing Siah three straight for the loss of fourteen points. Things were going better for Outcasts in the next set when Ben Towers led Francis by two ends to one. Ben nearly pulls it off in the third end but falls at the last hurdle 13-11. Into the deciding end and, for the second time on the night, Ben loses narrowly 11-9 in the fifth. 96 points needed on this occasion. There is an extraordinary similarity in the pattern and outcome of Ben's first two sets! Comets are now firmly in the driver's seat and continued with two routine three-straight wins – Wong over Siah and Persaud over Guimichev. Outcasts are 7-0 up. Siah starts well in the next set grabbing the first end from Francis 16-14. But that's as far as he got. Francis reeled off the next three ends for another Comets win. The last two sets also went Comets way. Ben Towers didn't make much of a dent in Persaud, losing three straight. As did Guimichev against Wong. Winston's on an unbeaten streak of 15 straight victories! Outcasts can't really complain about the 10-0 outcome. They were adrift in almost every set except those two Ben Towers' games.

Comets B and C have been mixing up their squads all season. When they played each other this week it took me more than one glance to work out which team was B and which was C. The B team comprised Eric Woo, Adil Islam and Richard Hallinan. The C team was Hej Sultani, Greg Gargrupe and Anoop Sharma. I've not a clue who'll win this. The trump card may be Sultani who should be on for a maximum giving the C team a strong chance of the win. Sultani faced what might be his hardest test in the first set, against Eric Woo. It's one end each when Hej ups his game to run away with the third end 11-4. He carried that on into the fourth end which, despite strong resistance from Eric, Hej won 11-8. First obstacle overcome. The next two sets also involved four ends. First, Islam beat Greg Gargrupe and then Sharma beat Hallinan narrowly where the third end finished 12-10 and the fourth end 13-11! There's a possible upset in set four as Islam takes the first two ends off high flying Sultani. The upset looks likely as the score reached 10-10 in the third, followed by 11-11. Two points needed to win it but who would be successful? It proved to be Sultani, dicing with death, before clinging on 13-11. The fourth end was also close. Another narrow win for Sultani 11-9. So, Sultani's comeback complete, we come to a one-end shoot out to determine the winner of the set. I hadn't expected this to be a problem for Hej but at 10-10 in the fifth Islam's chances of pulling off the surprise win are still very much alive. Those who support the underdog should stop reading now! It's Sultani who wins the two crucial points to take the set 13-11 in the fifth. 107 points contested – the longest set we've seen for months – and Adil falls agonisingly short. Bad luck! That makes the match score 3-1 to the C team. The B team fight back taking the next two sets three straight. Woo beats Sharma and Hallinan gets a key win over Gargrupe. More drama in set seven as Islam and Sharma find themselves in a real ding-dong battle. Islam wins the first end but Sharma has his nose in front after three ends. Islam comes back to win the next end and it's all square going into the decider. Islam has already lost one five-ender tonight, is he to lose another one? Well, it took 99 points to find the winner. The contest had swung backwards and forwards but it's Adil Islam who ends up on top, 11-8 in the fifth. The B team have won three sets in a row and turned the 1-3 scoreline into 4-3! Sultani comes back to level the match 4-4 with a four-end defeat of Richard Hallinan. But, in the final singles set, the B team regain the lead as Woo beats Gargrupe three straight. And so to the doubles where, surprise, surprise, both teams drop their best players. It's Hallinan and Islam versus Gargrupe and Sharma. Will it be a win or a draw? Not sure if there was anything clever in the team selections but it worked for the B team as they captured the win in three ends. That gave the B team the win 6-4. This was an entertaining match. Another maximum for Sultani in a successful season. Two long five-enders and four more sets that each occupied four ends. The B and C teams continue their personal rivalry for positions six and seven in the league table.

Morpeth beat PRO 7-3 in the first half and they fielded the same team for the return fixture: Jens Marott, Duncan Brown and Simon Holohan. PRO made two changes, bringing in Jai Persaud and George Buck to replace Ronnie Turner and Oliver Pink, alongside John Crawford. We start with a contest between each team's best players. It's John Crawford against Simon Holohan. This has the makings of a good match and sure enough it's pretty even over the first four ends. It's two ends each but momentum should be with John as he dominated the fourth end 11-2. But John has lost his last three five-enders in this division. Does that point to a Simon win or is it time for John to break that streak? Simon won their first half contest and he pushes on to do the double over John, winning 11-8 in the fifth. As sometimes happens, John lost the set despite winning more points than Simon! That brings Jens Marott and Jai Persaud to the table. Don't think these two have played each other before. Jai begins with a comfortable win in the first end. And then went on to win the next two ends without too much trouble. Didn't expect that to be so easy! Impressive win for Jai. Out comes the in-form Duncan Brown to take on George Buck. It doesn't last long as Duncan wins without breaking sweat. It's 2-1 to Morpeth after the first round of matches. Set four and can Jai continue his successful start? This time he faces Simon Holohan. It's dead even after the first two ends. But then the wheels came off for Jai as Simon brushed him aside in the next two ends. Set five looks to be a good one as John Crawford takes on Duncan Brown. John won the first half contest in four fairly comfortable ends. But since then, Duncan has had some good wins and I expect this to be close. They each won one of the first two ends before Duncan goes ahead by winning the third end 11-6. He leads 4-0 in the fourth and on course for victory when suddenly no points were coming his way. That 4-0 score quickly turned into an 8-11 outcome in John's flavour. That means we need a fifth end. Duncan again quickly builds a big lead – 5-1 up at the change of ends. But again, Duncan ran into the buffers and found himself 8-7 down! He regains his composure and took back the lead at 9-8. And then lost it again as John reaches match point at 10-9. Duncan finally succumbed at 12-10 in the fifth. A fighting display from both players! Two four-enders followed and both went Morpeth's way. George Buck lost to Jens Marott and Jai Persaud struggled to get close to Duncan Brown. The match was won in the next set as Holohan had no trouble with George Buck to take the score to 6-2. I expected the last singles set to go PRO's way as Crawford faced Marott having beaten him comfortably in the first half. But just to show you nothing is certain, Jens raced out of the starting blocks and

never looked back, putting in an impressive display to win three straight in quick time. PRO have only won one doubles all season and Morpeth were in no mood to allow them to improve that record, winning in four ends. An 8-2 win for Morpeth, one better than the first half fixture. Morpeth have one hand on the second place position while PRO look nervously at the two Comets teams sitting just behind them.

RICHARD CAMPBELL
DIVISIONAL SECRETARY

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AVERAGES (Qualification: ≥ 12 sets played)

| Player | Team | Sets Won | Sets Played | Average (%) |
|------------|-----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Persaud | COMETS A | 25 | 26 | 96.2 |
| Wong | COMETS A | 20 | 21 | 95.2 |
| To | MORPETH A | 18 | 21 | 85.7 |
| Francis | COMETS A | 17 | 20 | 85.0 |
| Johnson | NAT WEST | 15 | 18 | 83.3 |
| Sultani | COMETS C | 16 | 21 | 76.2 |
| S Fagan | COMETS A | 11 | 15 | 73.3 |
| Samuels | NAT WEST | 11 | 15 | 73.3 |
| Holohan | MORPETH A | 13 | 18 | 72.2 |
| Brown | MORPETH A | 16 | 24 | 66.7 |
| Marott | MORPETH A | 13 | 21 | 61.9 |
| Loveder | CASTAWAYS | 10 | 17 | 58.8 |
| LeMilliere | CASTAWAYS | 14 | 25 | 56.0 |
| Adesanya | COMETS B | 8 | 15 | 53.3 |
| Bispham | CASTAWAYS | 8 | 17 | 47.1 |
| Crawford | PRO | 12 | 27 | 44.4 |
| Woo | COMETS C | 9 | 21 | 42.9 |
| Guimichev | OUTCASTS | 6 | 15 | 40.0 |
| Islam | COMETS C | 7 | 21 | 33.3 |
| Siah | OUTCASTS | 6 | 18 | 33.3 |
| Turner | PRO | 5 | 18 | 27.8 |
| Coull | OUTCASTS | 3 | 12 | 25.0 |
| Sathasivam | COMETS B | 3 | 12 | 25.0 |
| Jones | NAT WEST | 6 | 30 | 20.0 |
| Persaud | PRO | 3 | 15 | 20.0 |
| Sharma | COMETS C | 3 | 18 | 16.7 |
| Buck | PRO | 1 | 12 | 8.3 |