

LONDON BANKS AND CIVIL SERVICE TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE BULLETIN 1

AS AT 29 OCTOBER 2023

	P	W	D	F	A	B	P
CASTAWAYS	2	1	1	15	5	6	21
MORPETH A	2	1	0	9	11	6	15
COMETS A	1	1	0	10	0	3	13
NAT WEST	1	1	0	8	2	3	11
COMETS B	1	0	1	5	5	3	8
NORDWEST	1	0	0	2	8	3	5
GOOD KARMA	1	0	0	1	9	3	4
PRO	1	0	0	0	10	3	3

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 1

The season begins with what is usually a close fixture: Castaways versus Morpeth. It wasn't many years ago that Morpeth were an outside bet for the title and even last season they took nine sets off of Castaways in the season's two fixtures. Against that background not sure what to make of this season's result – a whitewash, with Castaways cruising home 10-0! Team compositions revealed nothing out of the ordinary. For Castaways, McKee, Bispham and LeMilliere, and for Morpeth, Brown, To and Alnak. Terry McKee began with a three straight win over Duncan Brown. That was followed by two four-enders: Johnny Bispham beating Toan To and Neil LeMilliere beating Adam Alnak. The next set was the longest of the night. Again, it was resolved in four ends but it involved 103 points – very unusual for a four-ender to top 100 points. It also featured two marathon ends: a 19-17 outcome which might yet be the longest end of the season and an 18-16 outcome too. Who was involved? It was Johnny Bispham squeezing past a luckless Duncan Brown! The rest of the sets all followed the same pattern. No joy for Morpeth, though Toan To was in with a shout against LeMilliere, and also took an end off McKee. Six sets went to four ends so closer than the result implies. That included all of Bispham and To's sets. Time will tell if this one-sided result is significant. Are Castaways about to mount a major threat to Comets A's dominance or is it just Morpeth are still in pre-season mode?

Week 2

Morpeth's next match was very different. First, they changed their personnel significantly with only Toan To retained from Week One. The two newcomers were Kimmy Lai-Brown and Chuang Yi, who both played for Comets last season. They strengthen Morpeth's squad. Lai-Brown is awkward and Yi took some big scalps in his few appearances last season. Morpeth's opponents were Karma, who fielded George Sanders, Michael Miller and newcomer Peter Schmidt. The first set saw To against Schmidt. This turned out to be a close contest. Schmidt took the first end while To took the next two ends. Schmidt stays in the set by winning the fourth and so we're into the deciding end. The final end of this seesaw set belonged to To, who came home 11-7 in the fifth. The next four sets all ended three straight and all went to Morpeth. Wins for Yi (over Sanders and Schmidt), Lai-Brown (over Miller) and To (also over Miller). Karma were 5-0 down. This was followed by a victory for Lai-Brown over Sanders which required all five ends with Lai-Brown coming back from two ends to one down to steal it 11-7 in the fifth. Yi beat Miller in four before Lai-Brown was involved in another marathon, against

Schmidt. The first two ends were shared. Lai-Brown takes the third end and looks to be on for the win in the fourth but Schmidt fights back and takes it 12-10. The final end was a nailbiter that went to 10-10 before Lai-Brown takes the next two points and the set. A good contest that might have gone either way! Karma's single win of the night came in the next set as George Sanders pipped Toan To over four close ends. The match ended 9-1 to Morpeth but, like the previous match above, it was closer than it appears. Three sets went to five ends and a further two sets involved four ends.

Next saw Northwest's debut in the top Division. They bring with them Rhyan Nelson, who also plays for Ellenborough in the Barnet League and should average 70%+ in this Division. Along with Rhyan their usual team includes Grace Stair and Albert Francis (didn't he play for Insurance about four years ago in this Division?). Their first opponents – Nat West – did them no favours fielding almost the strongest team they could: Tony Catt, Adam, Johnson and Chris Herbert. Catt began with a three straight win over Stair which was followed by a close contest between Nelson and Johnson. Rhyan took the first end while Adam took the next two. The fourth end could have gone either way but Adam stole it 12-10, thereby winning the set and depriving us of an intriguing fifth end. Next set, Albert Francis pulled off an unexpected win, beating Herbert 11-2 in the fourth end of a seesaw set. NatWest then registered two successive wins before Nelson stepped up to narrowly beat Herbert three straight (two ends finishing at deuce). Nat West pulled away to lead 6-2, which took us to set nine and the longest set of the night. Tony Catt took the first two ends from Rhyan Nelson, but Rhyan fought back to level the set two-all. All the momentum seemed to be with Rhyan but somehow Tony pulled himself together to win the deciding end 11-5. A good win! The match ended 8-2 to Nat West.

The mighty Comets A began with a match against PRO. Fair to say that PRO were never in this match as Comets reeled off a string of three straight victories. The rhythm was only interrupted by Jai Persaud taking an end off Cain Fagan and a very interesting set between Fagan and Ronnie Turner. Ronnie started brilliantly by winning the first two ends. This wasn't meant to happen! Caught off guard, Cain dug in and upped his game to level the set by playing more aggressively. At this point the outcome of the set was far from clear. Who would hold their nerve? All of a sudden, a string of points started to go Cain's way and he emerged the victor 11-5 in the fifth. A good effort from Ronnie! For Comets, Ian Francis was untroubled and Laikram Persaud was his usual miserly self, conceding an average of fewer than five points per end. Comets A begin the season with a whitewash!

Last season Comets B evolved into the spoilers of the Division – a team never pushing for the title but well capable of surprise performances against any top team. For their first match, Comets B fielded regulars David Adesanya and Allam Bhangoo plus an interesting newcomer Kevin Fang. Kevin's known in the Central League and should gain a decent average in this division. Their opponents were Castaways who started well last week but this week had team selection problems. In came Mike Loveder to join Neil LeMilliere but the number three was Andy Nash, a regular years ago but not seen since 2019-20. The match got a bit mixed up because of late running. Things started well for Comets as Fang beat LeMilliere in four. Loveder then had a real struggle with Adesanya, initially looking like the winner at two ends to one up, then losing a tight fourth end 13-11, before just clinching a nail-biting deciding end 11-9. A key victory for Castaways! Andy Nash then started slowly against Bhangoo but regained his form as the set progressed and won it in four. Another influential set followed. Adesanya got the better of the first three ends over LeMilliere. Neil looked out of it in the fourth but somehow clawed his way back 12-10 to square the set. Settle down for a great decider! But no, at that point everything suddenly went in Adesanya's favour and in the blink of an eye he sat down the winner 11-3. Strange twist of fate. The match score was 2-2. It moved to 3-3 with wins for Fang over Nash countered by Loveder beating Bhangoo. The next two sets saw Adesanya comfortably beat Nash and then Fang beat Loveder even more comfortably. That put Comets 5-3 up. LeMilliere pulled one back with a win over Bhangoo and, with time running out, the doubles was conceded by Comets making the outcome a draw. Not a very satisfactory match, partly affected by having to rush through the last few sets. Castaways remain unbeaten but I suspect they were hoping for better than a draw.

RICHARD CAMPBELL
DIVISIONAL SECRETARY

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AVERAGES (Qualification: \geq sets played)

Player	Team	Sets Won	Sets Played	Average (%)
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Will start in the next bulletin.