

LONDON BANKS AND CIVIL SERVICE TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE BULLETIN 5

AS AT 26 NOVEMBER 2023

	P	W	D	F	A	B	P
CASTAWAYS	6	4	2	43	17	18	61
MORPETH A	6	3	1	33	27	18	51
COMETS A	4	3	1	33	7	12	45
COMETS B	4	3	1	27	13	12	39
NAT WEST	5	1	0	20	30	15	35
PRO	5	1	1	18	32	15	33
GOOD KARMA	4	1	0	9	31	12	21
NORDWEST	4	0	0	7	33	12	19

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 6

We begin with a potentially interesting match between all-conquering Comets A and Morpeth. Comets have a strong team out – Cain Fagan, Steve Fagan and Laikram Persaud. Morpeth have the man of the moment in Johnny Yi plus Adam Alnak and Toan To. After last week's heroics against Nat West, it will be interesting to see how Johnny copes with the Comets trio. First contest sees Johnny up against Cain Fagan. It's not looking good for Johnny as Cain takes both the first two ends. The third end proves to be close but Johnny gets home 11-9. We have a match on our hands! But, inexplicably, we didn't. Cain's game seemed to fall apart after that and Johnny took the next two ends for the loss of just nine points. The next two sets both went Comets' way with Steve Fagan beating Alnak for the loss of one end and Persaud doing his usual demolition job on Toan To. Alnak then returned to face Cain Fagan. After three ends, Alnak was in front. Cain comes back to take the fourth set comfortably. Didn't expect this to go five! Into the deciding end and Cain's not pulling away. They're tied at 9-9. It took just two more points to resolve this contest, but in whose favour?? The surprise winner was Adam, pulling off a great victory. Next, sit back for the big one – it's Yi against Persaud. After Johnny's convincing win over Chris Penrose last week, you have to think he's in with a chance. And, in extraordinary first end, Johnny crushed Persaud 11-3! The next end was a bit closer but again it went to Johnny 11-9. He surely can't repeat last week's three straight win over Penrose?? In the third end, Laikram put together a string of good points to win it 11-6. In the fourth end, Johnny had the win in sight at 10-10, only for Laikram to take the next two points. So, after the shock of that first end, we reach the fifth end with all to play for. It remained all square right up to 9-9. And then, in a reversal of the fourth end, Yi took the next two points and with it the set! An incredible match that could not have been closer! The drama continued as in the next set Toan To came from two ends to one down to take Steve Fagan to a fifth end. At that point, Fagan accelerated away and won the deciding end 11-5. Persaud returned to winning ways in the next set comfortably beating Alnak. That was followed by a good win for To over Cain Fagan in four ends to complete a bleak night for Cain. The final singles – Yi against Steve Fagan – was another nail biter. Once again, Yi goes off like a train and captures the first two ends. In a strange repeat of the Persaud set, Yi is on the verge of winning at 14-14 in the third when Steve takes the next two points. A short time later we reached the inevitable conclusion – it's 11-11 in the final end. Has Yi blown his chance? It seems not, as he wins the next two points for his third victory of the night! 100 points played in that set! The doubles went to Comets and so the outcome was a draw. What do we make of that in the cold light of day? Certainly, a good result for Morpeth. Yi played 15 long ends for his maximum with two wins ending a deuce. Some performance

against three strong opponents! I can't remember anyone else ever taking three sets off Comets! Cain Fagan emerged winless – there must be a story there. Great match! I look forward to the return fixture!

PRO's match this week was against dark horses Comets B. No surprises in PRO's team (are there ever?) – Crawford, Buck and Turner. For Comets, we see familiar names in David Adesanya and Tai Luu and newcomer Arunn Sathasivam. Arunn is playing for Comet in the second division. He makes his debut against Ronnie Turner and gets in front after three ends. Ronnie then woke up to the threat, finding another gear, to win the next two ends with just six points lost. David Adesanya plays most weeks with considerable success. Could John Crawford upset him in the next set? It looked that way at the changeover after the first end which John won 11-5. Adesanya levelled things at one end all and then ran away with the next two ends for a fairly comfortable win. We see the same pattern in set three – George Buck takes the first end before Tai Luu comes back to win the next three. Then, John Crawford took no chances in set four capturing the third and final end just at the point that Sathasivam looked to be mounting a comeback. The match score is 2-2 and PRO, who are not favourites, are doing okay. There are winnable sets left to play for PRO but it's vital they come out in front from Luu's and Adesanya's remaining sets. Things took a downturn in the next set as Tai Luu stole a victory from under Crawford's nose, coming from two ends down to canter home in five. PRO then lost four sets in a row and, with the score moving from 2-2 to 6-2 in Comets' favour, PRO need a hero. Up steps Ronnie Turner to face Adesanya. Consult the formbook but it's thin on this encounter – just one head-to-head which Ronnie won in the fifth end after a marathon contest. So, with little to go on, who's your money on? Bad news for PRO as David wins the first two ends. Time to dig deep. Strong attack from Ronnie and impenetrable defence from David but we inch back to all square at two ends each. This is like the last time they met! And so it was, reaching 9-9 in the fifth. At this point you need to catch a break. We've all been in this position. A net, an edge, a brilliant shot. Unfortunate that someone has to lose. The winner proved to be David, 11-9 in the fifth – so close! So, PRO have not made the hoped-for headway in the singles and face a 7-2 deficit going into the doubles. It was Crawford and Turner versus Adesanya and Luu. Each pairing took it in turns to win an end. PRO went 5-4 down in the final end and the odds favoured Comets. But PRO weren't giving up and fought all the way back to hold match points at 10-8. Fortunes quickly reversed and Comets promptly take the next three points to hold a match point of their own. PRO made it 11-11 and in the next rally Turner played an unbelievable return to take PRO to their third match point. Time for cool heads! Believe it or not, PRO won the next point to complete the victory. An excellent win and well played to both pairings! 7-3 to Comets and a long night for all with 41 out of the possible 50 ends being contested. Typical PRO you might think and indeed this season they've played an average of 38 ends per match across all their fixtures to date. That's not the most however. That record belongs to Karma, playing 39 ends on average in each match (which, as we saw last week, is mostly due to the "Peter Schmidt phenomenon").

Last match of the week involves Castaways and Nat West. Neither team is having their best season. Castaways are struggling to field a team on par with recent seasons and Nat West have unusually lost three matches in a row. Castaways put out the same trio as last week: Bispham, LeMilliere and Grant. Nat West have Herbert and Jones but bring in Adam Johnson in place of Les Samuels. It's first blood to Nat West as Johnson beats LeMilliere in four. Nat West then draw level with a surprisingly easy three-straight defeat of Chris Herbert by Bispham. The third set could go either way and will be a big boost for the winning team. It's Gareth Jones against Norman Grant. Grant starts well taking the first two ends. Jones stages a comeback in the third end, winning it 11-8. But that's where Jones' bid to win the set ended as Grant ran away with the fourth end 11-2. Another key set followed. It's Bispham against Johnson – a very hard set to call. They've met once before – a set Bispham won narrowly. Bispham gets the better of the first three ends and looks to be the winner but Johnson manages to steal the fourth end just, with a 14-12 scoreline. Everything points to a hard-fought final end but it didn't work out like that. Instead, Bispham pulled away to take the deciding end 11-6. Le Milliere then beat Jones but it was by no means straightforward, ending in the fifth at 11-6. It's 4-1 to Castaway who have won all of the key sets. 4-1 became 5-3 with a win for Bispham over Jones offset by wins for Herbert and Johnson over Grant. The final key set of the night then arose, pitting LeMilliere against Herbert. Over the years both players have had the edge in this contest but latterly it's been Neil who's come out in front. This time it ended three straight, though each end was very close, and the win went to LeMilliere. Castaways added the doubles to make the final score 7-3 in their favour. I thought it would be closer. That's Nat West's fourth straight loss. And a boost for Castaways as they prepare for next week's top of the table encounter with Comets A (Comets B play Morpeth on the same night. A good night's table tennis in prospect next Thursday at the Abbey.)

AVERAGES (Qualification: ≥ 6 sets played)

Player	Team	Sets Won	Sets Played	Average (%)
Yi	MORPETH A	12	12	100.0
Francis	COMETS A	8	9	88.9
Johnson	NAT WEST	8	9	88.9
Persaud	COMETS A	8	9	88.9
Bispham	CASTAWAYS	13	15	86.7
Adesanya	COMETS B	10	12	83.3
Fang	COMETS B	5	6	83.3
McKee	CASTAWAYS	5	6	83.3
S Fagan	COMETS A	5	6	83.3
LeMilliere	CASTAWAYS	14	18	77.8
Luu	COMETS B	7	9	77.8
C Fagan	COMETS A	8	12	66.7
Crawford	PRO	6	12	50.0
To	MORPETH A	6	12	50.0
Sanders	GOOD KARMA	3	6	50.0
Turner	PRO	7	15	46.7
Alnak	MORPETH A	5	12	41.7
Brown	MORPETH A	4	12	33.3
Nelson	NORDWEST	4	12	33.3
Schmidt	GOOD KARMA	4	12	33.3
Persaud	PRO	2	6	33.3
Samuels	NAT WEST	2	6	33.3
Herbert	NAT WEST	3	12	25.0
Francis	NORDWEST	2	12	16.7
Grant	CASTAWAYS	1	6	16.7
Link	GOOD KARMA	1	6	16.7
Stair	NORDWEST	1	9	11.1