

AS AT 18 FEBRUARY 2024

	P	W	D	F	A	B	P
CASTAWAYS	12	8	3	83	37	36	119
COMETS A	11	7	3	84	26	33	117
COMETS B	10	7	3	66	34	27	93
NAT WEST	11	4	3	56	54	33	89
MORPETH A	10	4	2	50	50	30	80
PRO	11	2	3	40	70	33	73
NORDWEST	11	1	0	28	82	33	61
GOOD KARMA	10	1	1	23	77	30	53

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 17

In the first half Castaways had a major wobble against PRO and ended up drawing a match they expected to win. The return fixture sees Castaways chasing every point to keep in the title race and can't afford any slip ups. PRO was as usual – Crawford, Buck and Turner – while Castaways were unchanged from the previous week – Loveder, Bispham and LeMilliere. The first round of sets yielded one easy win and two struggles. Loveder quickly dismissed George Buck three straight. The first two ends between Crawford and Bispham were shared. The third end proved to be a runaway victory for Bispham giving him the advantage. In the fourth end Bispham stands on the verge of snatching the win but Crawford hangs on and just takes it 12-10. The fifth end proved to be a repeat of the third. A slow start from Crawford which he never made up, losing by 11-6. Crawford stayed at the table for the third set, taking on LeMilliere. This time John started well, taking the first end. The next three ends were all close and won by two or three points. Unfortunately for John all three ends were won by Neil so a second frustrating loss for him. Ronnie Turner began his night with a crunch set against Loveder. In the first two ends everything went Mike's way and he looked on course for a quick victory. But then, in an unexpected turnaround, all the points started going Ronnie's way and he levelled the set at two ends all. With the momentum behind him Ronnie went into the deciding end looking to press home his advantage. Yet it was Mike who came back to pinch the final end. A good win in a topsy-turvy contest! Four sets played and 4-0 to Castaways – just the start they wanted. The score became 5-0 as Bispham beat Buck. It certainly wasn't PRO's night and things got worse when Turner got himself into a winning position against LeMilliere only to fall at the final hurdle, losing 11-6 in the fifth. Crawford never really got started against Loveder, amassing just 18 points in a three straight loss. The last three sets all went to Castaways to claim maximum points from the fixture. An odd night, four ends went the distance but no joy for PRO. Just one of those nights, I guess. Nice to see Mike Loveder getting the Player of the Match award!

Comets B versus Karma was postponed this week.

Week 18

Neither Morpeth nor Nat West are having the best of seasons but their fixture this week ought to be a close one. Morpeth took the honours in the first half 6-4 thanks to a Cheung maximum. Team compositions looked very

different in the second half with Nat West fielding Jones, Herbert and Chris Penrose, and Morpeth fielding To, Alnak and a reserve with the longest name ever seen in this division Shubho Bandyopadhyay. Penrose looks on for a maximum I'd say but his first outing, against Toan To, took longer than expected. To lost the first end but was in the second end right up to the last two points that both went Penrose's way for 12-10 escape. To's progress continued in the fourth end which he won 11-5. Is this the beginning of a fightback? "No", is the answer as Penrose raced through fourth end to take the winning end 11-6. The next three sets were all over in three ends. Herbert made light work of Alnak, as did Gareth Jones against Shubho and Penrose against Alnak. Three nice wins for Nat West and they're leading 4-0. Next up was another banker win for Nat West as Gareth Jones had twice previously beaten Toan To. But history didn't seem to count for much a few minutes later as To edged past Jones in three close ends. It's 4-1 to Nat West and Morpeth are off the mark. Set 6 saw Chris Herbert defeat Shubho in four ends. Set seven continued Gareth Jones' unpredictable night as, having lost to Adam Alnak in the first half, he beat him in the reverse fixture in four ends. Nat West are running away with this! Things continued to go their way as they mopped up the last three sets in double quick time to post an unexpected 9-1 win. Hard not to conclude that outcome was more about team compositions than outstanding table tennis.

Castaways, still on the trail of maximum points, had high expectations at the prospect of taking on Northwest. The first half result was 7-3 to Castaways but this time Castaways strengthen up whereas Northwest put out the same team – Nelson, Stair and Francis. Castaways welcome back Terry McKee after a three-week absence to join Loveder and LeMilliere. That absence didn't seem to trouble Terry as he quickly took the first two ends against Rhyan Nelson. Not sure what happened at that point but Rhyan came storming back to take the third and fourth ends to set up a decider. And it didn't stop there as Rhyan lodged a come-from-behind surprise win against a player well above him in the averages. First blood to Northwest! Rhyan's next opponent was Neil LeMilliere and again he dropped the first end. And again he came back to take the second, third and fourth ends to steal another victory and avenge his first half loss. So, only Mike Loveder stood between Rhyan and an impressive maximum. For the third time on the night Rhyan lost the opening end. You can guess what happened next! Yes, he won the second, third and fourth ends to complete an excellent night's table tennis. Given Rhyan's brilliant record in Division 2 last season I had been expecting more from him yet this is only the second time this season he has won all three. His efforts deservedly gave him the Player of the Match award. Other than that, Northwest struggled to make inroads on their Castaways opposition. There was a glimmer of hope when Albert Francis came back from losing the first two ends against LeMilliere to square the set and provoke a deciding end. Unfortunately, a slow start in the fifth put him behind, a situation he never recovered from. LeMilliere wins 11-5 in the fifth. All the remaining sets went Castaways' way to achieve a 7-3 result – the same as the first half – but falling short of the maximum points they need for the title race.

The last match of the week proved to be a real cracker! Comets B brought their strongest team to take on Comets A. The B team fielded Zach Martillo, Jamie Mullineaux and Kevin Fang while A team had Ian Francis, Laikram Persaud and Cain Fagan. A real clash of the giants! The B team started with a bang as Martillo best Francis in four ends. Then Persaud faced Mullineaux. You may remember Jamie won this encounter in the first half in four hotly contested ends. This time Jamie won the first two ends and had a great chance for a three-straight outcome before Laikram stole the end 12-10. In the fourth end Jamie held on to get the job done by an 11-8 scoreline thereby doing the double over Laikram – not sure anyone's previously managed to achieve that! A great start for the B team. Next up Cain Fagan took on Kevin Fang. This was a real battle in the first half that Kevin just managed to win. Cain got the better of the first three ends. Kevin came back to win the fourth. The deciding end went on and on and the pair were still inseparable after 20 points. The set ended after two more points – both of which went to Fagan! The A team are on their way back with a 1-2 match score. Set four was equally close as Martillo went two ends to one up on Persaud. The fourth end was do or die and like the previous set was still alive after 20 points. Again, it took just two points to reach a resolution which went in Martillo's favour. 3-1 in favour of the B team and Persaud's lost two! Kevin Fang then beat Francis in four ends and the B team are motoring! Fagan against Mullineaux looked like being a ding-dong battle on paper but turned out to be the shortest end of the night. Surprisingly, Fagan won three straight with little drama. In contrast, set seven was a real marathon. Persaud won two of the first three ends only for Fang to win the fourth end by a mile. We're in the fifth and surely Persaud can't lose all three! But that's what happened – Fang racing home 11-6 in the fifth. The B team are leading 5-1. Cain Fagan was having a good night but he soon found himself two ends down to Zach Martillo. Slowly, Fagan worked his way back into the contest, winning both the third and fourth ends. And that momentum carried on through the fifth as well, a brilliant comeback win for Cain 11-6 in the fifth. Mullineaux made light work of Francis and an uneventful doubles win for the A team gave the B team a 6-4

victory. That’s the A team’s first loss of the season and the title race remains alive. Player of the Match was Cain Fagan for his three wins over strong opposition! A good night’s table tennis!

This week’s match between Karma and PRO was postponed.

Only three rounds of matches remain. Castaways go top but Comets A have a match in hand and Comets B still have an outside chance of the title. Every result counts from now on!

RICHARD CAMPBELL
DIVISIONAL SECRETARY
Issued: 18/02/2024

AVERAGES (Qualification: ≥ 13 sets played)

Player	Team	Sets Won	Sets Played	Average (%)
Yi	MORPETH A	15	15	100.0
Johnson	NAT WEST	16	18	88.9
Adesanya	COMETS B	15	18	83.3
Fang	COMETS B	15	18	83.3
Persaud	COMETS A	22	27	81.5
Bispham	CASTAWAYS	23	30	76.7
C Fagan	COMETS A	18	24	75.0
Francis	COMETS A	13	18	72.2
S Fagan	COMETS A	13	18	72.2
LeMilliere	CASTAWAYS	25	36	69.4
McKee	CASTAWAYS	10	15	66.7
Crawford	PRO	17	30	56.7
Turner	PRO	14	27	51.9
Herbert	NAT WEST	10	21	47.6
Nelson	NORDWEST	15	33	45.5
To	MORPETH A	8	18	44.4
Brown	MORPETH A	9	21	42.9
Alnak	MORPETH A	10	24	41.7
Samuels	NAT WEST	6	15	40.0
Schmidt	GOOD KARMA	9	24	37.5
Sanders	GOOD KARMA	5	15	33.3
Francis	NORDWEST	8	33	24.2
Jones	NAT WEST	6	27	22.2
Miller	GOOD KARMA	3	18	16.7
Stair	NORDWEST	2	24	8.3
Zhao	GOOD KARMA	1	15	6.7