

In the days when table tennis games were played up to 21, scores of 25-23 or something similar were fairly familiar.

That is not the case now that 11 is the required target to win a game, yet twice in the space of days players in the Braintree Table Tennis League have produced scorelines that look as if they belong in the past.

Ian Rubens and Keir Hughes started the trend in the division three match between Rayne H and Black Notley H.

After sharing the first two games, they set off on a marathon in game three which went all the way to 24-23 – that's 14 deuces – before Rubens got the next point and the game.

After all that effort, he lost the next game, but rallied to win the fifth to make it worthwhile.

And it was a decisive set: Rayne won the match 6-4.

Just a few days later Liberal B's Trevor Laird and Rayne D's Cec Butcher got in on the act in division two – and took it further. Laird finally overcame his opponent's stubborn resistance at 27-25.

In his case, he had already won the first two games so he could sit down and relax for a bit.

Again it was a vital win as the match finished in a draw.

It was a match that featured the first defeats of the year for Mo Hardy. He was bettered by both Laird and Di Garner.

It was a result that did little to improve Rayne D's already distant hopes of the top spot.

They added a 9-1 win over Netts B but Rayne E's wins of 9-1 over Liberal B and 7-3 over Black Notley C took them further away at the top.

Sible Hedingham's chances of pinching second place off Rayne D were dented when they lost 6-4 to Nomads and then struggled to beat Rayne F by the same score.

Roy Hooper was unbeaten against Rayne F and came within a whisker of repeating the feat at Nomads, denied only at 12-10 in the fifth game by Kevin Saunders.

The division also threw up two other curios – two matches in which one team won all nine singles yet failed to win the doubles. Rayne F's Brian How and Ted Sims were successful against Notley C and Notley D's Keith Flowers and Bruce Wickham against Liberal B.

In division one, Bocking saw their position at the top look even more secure without lifting a bat.

Their two main challengers Black Notley A and Netts A both dropped points they can ill afford if they are to wrest the title from the champions.

Notley beat Rayne A 7-3 and Rayne B 9-1 while Netts dropped four points at Notley B.

Pillar House A were involved in two close matches. They just sneaked home 6-4 against Notley B, who had James Hicks to thank for three of those sets, then they shared the points with Rayne B, for whom Brian Riedling was unbeaten.

In division three, White Lions A's draw with second-placed Pillar House B leaves their own B team even better placed at the top.

After losing his unbeaten record in the previous match, Adam Clift rediscovered his form and took his three singles, all tight ones decided in five games.

Charles Wilkinson was undefeated in Rayne G's 7-3 win over Notley F while it was Simon Pohl who had a rush of form for Notley E against their own F team.

With only one win in his previous six attempts, he took all three, one of them by the curious scores 11-8, 0-11, 10-12, 11-3, 11-5.