

James Hicks and Scott Dowsett in division one, Cec Butcher in division two and newcomer Ian Wallace in division three all made their mark in the first week of this season's Braintree Table Tennis League competition.

Hicks's win over Kevin Gowlett, second in last year's individual averages, was probably the pick of the week. He had to come from two games down, was stretched to deuce in the third and fourth, but hung on to win the decider at 11-7.

Hicks, of Black Notley B, also got the better of David Edwards, as did Rob Stannard, but Nigel Hodder won all three singles in straight games to give champions Bocking a 7-3 victory.

Netts A are expected to be one of the teams to challenge Bocking for this year's title and Bocking's former star Paul Davison got them off to a 6-4 start with his three singles against Black Notley A.

But 14-year-old Scott Dowsett will be pleased with his win over England No.62 Nikki Kennard.

Rayne A lead the putative table after one week as a result of their 9-1 win over Liberal A. Ian Whiteside and Steve Pennell were undefeated while Barry Pritchard's win over Jon Hill gave Liberal their point.

The other two Rayne teams in the division had a close tussle, the B team just coming out on top by winning the final two sets.

Dean Andrews, having a temporary sojourn in the B team, won his three singles but it could be said that the excellent win by reserve Peter Taylor – in division three last year – over Alastair Brown clinched the victory.

Cec Butcher did not enjoy too profitable a time in his unexpected season in division one last year – not surprising as he passed his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday during the season – and he found life much more comfortable back in the gentler waters of division two.

He won his three singles to give Rayne D a 6-4 victory over Nomads.

The season may only just have started, but this match has already set the benchmark for the tightest set. Paul Wellington just outlasted Lorraine Burgess 20-18 in the final game – and the other four games were all decided by two points.

There was also Rayne v Rayne battle in this division and the E team had no mercy on their colleagues one place lower in the alphabet.

The 10-0 scoreline, however, hides three sets decided at deuce in the fifth game.

Brian How, making his comeback to the game this season after a long lay-off, was involved in all of them, two singles and the doubles. To get to deuce in the fifth with both Richard Whiteside and Dave Moles suggests How has pretty quickly got back into his stride.

Pillar House B can expect to be at the top end of division three while Notley H have a set of largely untried players. No surprise then that the home side took all ten.

Much of Notley's G team do not have a great deal of experience either but new signing Ian Wallace has played the game before as he proved in taking his three singles against Rayne G, including a tight 13-11-in-the-fifth win over Charles Wilkinson.