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27.3.09

table tennis

Reigning champion Paul Davison swept to his second successive Braintree Table Tennis League title with a convincing display at the league's finals night on Thursday (March 26).

Throughout the five rounds, he did not drop a single game.

His semi final and final opponents suffered the same way as those in earlier rounds – defeat in three straight games.

Both Terry Dowsett in the semi final and Ian Hayden in the final stretched Davison to deuce but neither could capitalise on the position.

Dowsett, who returned to the game this year after an eight-year break, showed only glimpses of the style that brought him six titles in the past.

The first two games went by in something of a haze for Dowsett and although he rallied to reach 12-10 in the third, Davison always appeared firmly in control.

Hayden took a while to come to terms with a battling Trevor Carter in the other semi final. The sharp half-volleys and quick reactions of his Crossing teammate caused him some difficulty but he eventually crept through in four tight games.

He looked livelier in the final and initially gave Davison something to think about with some crushing drives on both wings.

But the champion gradually got to grips with his game after something of a loose start. He remained positive, showed great speed round the table and had the ability to put the ball where it was not expected.

Hayden always appeared to be in with a shout but Davison got the points that mattered and ran out a 12-10, 11-6, 15-13 winner.

Unlike last year, Davison also took home the men's doubles trophy.

He and Bocking teammate Kevin Gowlett had fallen at the last hurdle in each of the last three years but never looked like doing so this year. Davison's speed and Gowlett's quick hits proved too much for Hayden and Carter.

They played the angles cleverly and showed more consistency than their rivals who played their part in an entertaining contest but eventually went down 11-8, 11-8, 11-5.

Ryan Pitt was another player to go away with two titles.

He defeated two of his Cressing B teammates, No.1 seed Duncan Elloy in the restricted singles, and Chris Ciniglio in the division two singles.

Pitt plays a punchy fast game with a leading backhand and strong forehand and refused to be driven back by Elloy's probing topspin.

It was a game of attack and counter attack but it was Pitt who was hitting the harder and he held the upper hand throughout to win in three straight games.

Ciniglio had similar difficulties in the division two final. Pitt worked hard to deny him the opportunity to get in his big hits before pitching in with some excellent ones of his own.

Again he took the title without dropping a game.

Elloy, however, did not go home empty handed. As one of the top two seeds in the restricted singles he was ineligible for the division two singles and so was given his chance in the division one event, a chance he took with both hands.

After dispatching two first division players in the earlier rounds, he made it three in the final when Rob Stannard fell by the wayside.

Initially discomfited by Stannard's deep chop and heavy loop, Elloy dropped the first game, but then got his own game in order and pushed his opponent back with a steady stream of aggression on both wings.

The division three singles final was the longest of the evening and provided an early upset.

Not only has Roy Hooper suffered four league defeats to his Hedingham colleague Graham Cannon's two this season, but he also lost to him in straight games in the veterans' singles.

But after a lengthy battle of attrition he found his way past him on Thursday.

Hooper was two games to one behind and trailed again in the decider, but he stuck to his task and in the end it was his teammate who showed the greater vulnerability.

The veterans' singles was the second game of the evening to be decided by two points in the fifth game but was an entirely different affair.

Nigel Hodder and Steve Kerns hammered attacking shots at each other. In a fluctuating set, they took it in turns to find their fluency, with some loose shots sprinkled among the excellent ones.

It was the climax of their encounter that brought the evening's outstanding moment.

Kerns looked in control in the final game as he moved to a 10-6 lead and four match points.

But Hodder refused to lie down, remained positive and pulled back three of them.

The next point was an all-out attacking blitz as both players crashed the ball at each other until Hodder unleashed an amazing backhand kill from the back of the court to leave Kerns dumbfounded.

He took the next two points to take the title in his first season in the league, some compensation for losing the Ipswich League title at deuce in the fifth four days earlier.

The other final saw a small piece of history as Scott Dowsett followed his father into the record books as the junior singles winner, the first father and son combination to win the event.

Dowsett senior's first junior title came with a crushing 21-11, 21-10 victory over Kevin Howard in 1977 and his son was in a similarly dominant mood.

Adam Pitt is a player who likes to come in with flat hits but he was given no chance to do so by a fired-up Dowsett who totally dominated the game with his heavy topspin and speed about the table.

Results: Men's singles final: Paul Davison beat Ian Hayden 21-10, 11-6, 15-13. Semi finals: Davison beat Terry Dowsett 11-3, 11-4, 12-10; Hayden beat Trevor Carter 12-10, 9-11, 11-5, 13-11.

Men's doubles: Davison and Kevin Gowlett beat Carter and Hayden 11-8, 11-8, 11-5.

Veterans' singles: Nigel Hodder beat Steve Kerns 6-11, 11-8, 12-10, 3-11, 12-10.

Junior singles: Scott Dowsett beat Adam Pitt 11-1, 11-7, 11-5.

Restricted singles: Ryan Pitt beat Duncan Elloy 11-9, 11-6, 11-8.

Division 1 singles: Elloy beat Rob Stannard 7-11, 11-5, 11-9, 11-6.

Division 2 singles: Pitt beat Chris Ciniglio 11-8, 11-9, 11-7.

Division 3 singles: Roy Hooper beat Graham Cannon 3-11, 11-9, 9-11, 11-8, 11-9.

Umpires were Arthur Clark and Graham Farmer.