



Braintree Table Tennis League stalwart Cec Butcher celebrated his 50th anniversary in the league when he turned out for his first match of the season.

Butcher is the longest serving player currently in the league and has not missed a season since he first turned his bat over in 1961.

In all that time he has played for only two clubs, Dunmow Youth Centre and, when that closed down, Rayne.

A very youthful 72-year-old, he still holds down a spot in division two and last year finished with a respectable average of 36 per cent.

Like many table tennis players, knee problems have restricted his appearances but after missing the first three matches of the season, he was in action for Rayne E in a vital match against Black Notley D.

With six points covering six teams at the top of the division, every point was important and Butcher did not let the side down in getting the better of Keith Flowers, never an easy player to beat.

Mo Hardy remained unbeaten but Notley D won the rest for a 6-4 victory.

Predictably Rayne E fared less well in the team knock out cup when faced with first division Black Notley B. James Hicks, Graham Farmer and Duncan Elloy took the lot for a 9-0 victory.

Rayne A took all eight sets played against Netts A, who turned out their B team, and it was the Notley C-Rayne D clash that produced the tightest match of the round.

The Rayne team were boosted by the inclusion of Steve Elmes, normally an A team player, but he was made to work hard for both his wins.

He was taken to five games by both Chris Parr and Zach Harrington, Parr in particular giving him a hard time by stretching him to 11-9 in the decider.

The restricted knock out games were all relatively straightforward.

Notley E had the most comfortable passage, 9-0 against Netts C, while Felsted RBL dropped only one set, a good win for Brian Dixon over Chris Butler, in knocking out Rayne J.

Rayne F and White Lions had 7-2 wins over Notley I and H respectively.

Warren Baines illustrated his continuing promise by notching up two wins over the higher placed Lions team while Vernon King and Mike Smith also recorded wins over second division players Alastair Brown and Peter Taylor respectively for Notley H.

Rayne G have added the formidable Shirley Carroll, an ex Chelmsford ladies' singles champion, to their roster and she helped them to an 8-1 win over Rayne H.