

In many ways Rayne E were the surprise team of last season's Braintree Table Tennis League when they rose above their D team to finish second in division two.

That was largely put down to the introduction of former first division player Paul Whybrow after illness ruled out Simon Fleming for the season.

But this year, without Whybrow, they are at the top of the division by their own efforts.

Happily Fleming is now back in action and he, Richard Whiteside, Phil Wade and Dave Moles have so far taken all before them – a record of seven wins out of seven.

Whiteside began the season with nine straight wins and although pegged back at Liberal B, he returned to winning form in the next two matches to give him seven out of the next nine.

Wade also won seven in their last three matches and Fleming six.

Against Liberal, it was Diane Garner who took away Whiteside's unbeaten record. He went on to lose also to Paul Lombardi, but Wade was at his best and won all three. Fleming won twice to give the team a 6-4 win.

They followed that with a 9-1 win over Black Notley C in which Gordon Fairchild's 15-13-in-the-fifth-game win over Wade was the home side's only success.

In their next match they dealt with the challenge of Sible Hedingham by 7-3. Roy Hooper got the better of Wade while Graham Cannon and Mark Brown beat Fleming.

It was only the second defeat for the newly promoted Hedingham.

In their previous two matches they had wins over Rayne F (8-2) and Notley D (10-0).

Ted Sims won the two sets for Rayne F but found Hooper too much for him.

Second-placed Rayne D were held to a draw by Liberal B for whom Trevor Laird was unbeaten.

In division one Notley A returned to the top (although Bocking have a match in hand) with a 6-4 win over Rayne A.

Peter Hayden was unbeaten for Notley while Jon Hill and Steve Pennell won twice each for Rayne.

Rayne B could only muster two players for their match at Pillar House A. Brian Riedling did all he could with three wins and the doubles with Paul Mitchell, but Mitchell was unable to get anywhere in the singles and Pillar House ended up 6-4 winners.

In division three White Lions A notched up their first win after losing their first three matches 6-4. They overcame Notley G 8-2, with the help of three wins from Adam Purslow, but in their next match they reverted to type and lost 6-4 again, this time to Rayne G.

In the Essex League, Braintree veterans' B and C teams both faced tough opposition in their first matches of the season after promotion last year.

The B team lost 6-3 to West Essex A in division three. Mike Johnston took two singles.

In division four, the C team lost 7-2 to Waltham Forest A. Dean Andrews won one singles.