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The team with the highest number of points at the end is the winner.    *This is what it is all about, the Frank Murphy Veterans Handicap Cup.*  BSM 1 started the match with a combined handicap of just 23 points. However, as you might expect, Waterloo started with a combined handicap of 184 points giving them a head start of 161 points. This meant that if they were to win BSM 1 would have to make up an average of 18 points on each and every set, or put another way restrict their opponents to no more than 24 points for each set. This looked like a daunting prospect against a very handy side currently riding high in their division and already through themselves to one cup final - the Division 5 Divisional Cup.  The first set on featured Ted playing the visiting No.1, a new player to the Liverpool League Gavin Minett. It was immediately obvious from Gavin's unusual service style why he has had such success in Division 5 of the League which when combined with his forthright attacking capabilities makes him such a dangerous player. This proved a worthy opener with Ted having to use all of his experience and cunning to snatch both games but with the overall points score 42:35 this was not quite what the doctor had ordered. Still it was 7 points off the deficit. This was followed by Barry and Tony who both firmly displayed the extra skills they have from playing at a much higher level taking their first matches 42:13 and 42:14 respectively, putting BSM 1 back on the right track. Some fine matches followed and all played in an excellent spirit, and all going the way of BSM 1. | | |  | | --- | | but please don't let the Chairman score!  There is no doubt Tony was the man of the match for BSM on the night gaining 126 points for the loss of just 52, but Barry wasn't far behind gaining 126 with the loss of 57. Ted also won all his three sets gaining 126 points to 92 against. Nevertheless it was not until the end of the 8th set that the points were square for the first time, 359 each. However if Club Chairman Fred Bainbridge had had his way, Waterloo would have been ahead! In one game, in which Fred was scoring, for a particularly good shot from one of the visitors he awarded 4 points instead of the more customary 1 point! Fortunately the vigilant crowd were on their toes, and the error was quickly corrected! In the final set Tony faced the visiting No.1. At times this set was fast and furious, but Tony's added top spin took its toll allowing him to ease through the first game 21:8. The damage was done, in effect no way back for Waterloo. Maybe Tony took his foot off the gas a little for the second game before winning through 21:18 but all credit to Gavin for a battling hard hitting contest. The outcome though a fine win for BSM 1 401 points to 385,a place in the final secured for the second year running. It will take a lot to prize that cup out of Barry's hands!  But BSM 1 are not the only team in town! Thursday saw the second semi-final of this competition, also featuring a BSM team. BSM 2, last season's beaten finalists, comprising captain Ken Jackson, Ricky Brown and Darren Taylor, faced a very useful looking Marconi 3. With both teams having a mixed line up and both featuring a strong recognised division 1 player and with the Marconi side having a handicap advantage of 118 points this looked like being a very interesting match indeed. Much would depend on how the BSM No.2 and No.3 fared against the strong opposing No.1 Adrian Bramham.  The small crowd that had gathered to spectate didn't have long to wait to see BSM's first test. The first match of the night, featuring the visiting No.1 against Ricky Brown, fresh back from an international darts tournament in the Isle of Man! No, Ricky wasn't playing, but his son who he had been to visit was! After a weeks holiday away from table tennis how would Ricky fare in this toughest of openers? In a match featuring perhaps two of the best defenders in the league it may have been a good idea to start off with the expedite rule! And one thing's for certain, by the end of game 1 it really looked as if Ricky had caught the sun on his holidays! Or, was he just hot, hot, hot! The first end went to the visitor 18:21. But by now Ricky was getting back into his stride and as always fighting for every point. With a magnificent effort he shaded the second game 21:20. So, Adrian had only gained 2 points for his team from his opener. By contrast BSM captain, Killer Ken, gained 35 points from his opener crushing his opponent 42:7. It was clear that the visiting No.2 and No.3 were no match for the Bath St boys and were duly despatched in each of the sets in which they featured. This placed huge pressure on the visiting No.1 so he would have to pull out all the stops in set 4 against Darren. It looked as if he might just do that, running away with the first game 10:21. But Darren is another fighter, and with some magnificent retrieving and adventurous attack against the ace defender he managed to snatch the second game 21:17. Adrian had therefore only gained 7 points for his team and only had Ken left to face!  By the end of the seventh set the scores were at last about even - Marconi just 2 points ahead. Ricky then duly saw off the visiting No.2 Ken Roberts to put BSM 2 22 points ahead. This meant that Adrian would have to beat Ken in the final set of the night, and handsomely, to give Marconi any chance of success. But Ken knew just how to play the ace defender and brought out his full range of attacking and defensive skills, plus a number of significant nets and edges, to complete his clean sweep for the night with a resounding 42:25 win. There is no doubt that Ken was the 'Man of the Match', but this is very much a team game and the positive contributions to the deficit reduction by Ricky (42 points) and Darren (31 points), and especially their contributions against the visiting No.1, played vital parts in securing a fantastic victory by 370 points to 331. Not bad from an opening deficit of 118 points!    *BSM 2 - Ken Jackson, Ricky Brown and Darren Taylor. Can they go one better than last year?*  And so the stage is set for another all Bath Street Final in the L&DTTL Frank Murphy Veterans Handicap Cup, an exact rematch of the final last year. This is a tremendous achievement by the two teams. But which way will it go this time..... it will be a surprise if you get any better than 'evens' if betting on this one! With any luck, Marine will be allowed to again host the Final - and if so then you can expect it to be on Wednesday 22 April; so book the date now! Best wishes to both teams. | | | | | |  | | | |  |
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