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We are delighted to welcome back to our top team this year Tony Kendall replacing the injured Julian Quirk who stepped up temporarily last season. If Tony can make the journey to Liverpool often enough this year his presence should add some extra strength to the team. The third member of the squad is Club Chairman Fred Bainbridge. Fred is enthusiastic about the fact that having hit the big 70 he is still able to play and enjoy table tennis at the highest level. But he is increasingly finding that turning his love of playing into winning games is getting harder each year! Overall though, the team should have enough quality to keep them in the middle of the table; a finish around 7th or 8th would be a good achievement.  **A Team - Division 1**  The A Team under the captaincy of Dave Roberts have now been playing together in Division 1 for several seasons, and we can expect them to again be a competitive force around the middle of the table. Dave will again be the backbone of the team and will need to maintain all of his cunning and consistency to ensure the team competes well. He will be well supported by Clare Peers and Dermot Tierney. Clare is still one of the top lady players in the Liverpool League and well capable of taking on the best players in the league. Providing she does not have to miss too many matches the team should be capable of taking points from all their competitors. Dermot is continuing to grow in his first division experience but his participation in just one league means that he is not performing at the highest level quite as often as some of his opponents. His explosive game does however have the potential to add more points to the team tally and his contributions will be vital to the team's success. Again expect the team to be around the middle of the table and a finish in the top 8 will mean another good consistent year.  **B Team - Division 2**  In effect a new team and in a new division. Last season all three players played as the D team in division 3 where they gained promotion as runners-up. However both Ricky Brown and Ian McElwee have previous experience of playing at this level. Last season was Ian's first full season back after major heart surgery, and his game has been gradually improving as his strength and health have improved. It is fair to say that whilst he still may not be quite back to his former best he will be a very strong competitor at this level. Ricky has been around this level for many a year and is also still a very mean player! Neither will give much away. They are joined by Barry Davis who will once again captain the team. Since his entry into table tennis just a few seasons ago Barry has gone from strength to strength and will relish the challenge of this new higher level. Untested as a team at this level it is difficult to predict where they might finish! However just keep an eye out, as the team might surprise, we confidently expect them to finish in the top half of the division - best guess, let's say 5th!! | | |  | | --- | | What drama will the new season bring?  **C Team - Division 2**  The loss of last years captain and No.1 Colin Owens is likely to have a big impact on the team. Colin who has moved home and changed his personal circumstances is unfortunately not able to play in Liverpool this season. However he is replaced by another Colin, newcomer Colin Mitchell. Colin also played as part of the successful D Team last season which gained promotion from division 3 and will be relishing the prospect of testing himself at this seriously high level. Colin is another player who has only taken up the game in recent years and has made tremendous progress. A natural sportsman and keen competitor he will make a great team member and will be keen to try and make his mark. For the team much will depend on the form of Rob Peat who is well able to trouble the best. Dave Stoddern will take over the captains armband and if he can match the new responsibilities with enhanced performances as he grows in experience at this level then the team should be able to do enough to stay in the division. It is likely however to be a tough year for the team, and they will do well to stay up.  **D Team - Division 3**  When you have one of the club's best team captains it always seems to inspire great performances. And in Brian Crolley the D Team have arguably the best team captain in the club. And so often this team, which has now been around division 3 for a while, seem to outperform themselves and their expectations. A never say die approach has tipped the balance in many a match and we expect it to do the same this year. Brian will again be joined by the Chinese Champion Andy Cheung and the flashing backhand of Mal Kent. They will give any team a run for their money. We expect them to maintain their 5th place in the division of last year, and maybe they can even go one better, who knows......  **E Team - Division 3**  Promoted from Division 4 last year this team will be under new management. Ted Cramsie will take over at the helm, giving Graham Oates a well earned break from captaincy responsibilities. Ted will also continue to take on the mantle of the team No.1 and has even acquired a new bat for the season! Ted is a seasoned campaigner at this level and will worry most of his opponents. The team is joined by 17 year old Sam Pierce who showed some real progress in the second half of last season and will be keen to test himself at this higher level and playing all the members of the opposing team, which means he will be regularly competing against the best the division has to offer. Sam's success is likely to be key to the teams performances. The third member of the team is Club Secretary Graham Turner. Graham needs to find his consistency but will also be no push over at this level. The team don't look quite strong enough to compete for top places in this tough division but should finish up in the top half, expect a finish very close to the D team.  **F Team - Division 4**  Keep an eye on this team! Captained by the irrepressible Dave Noden you can bet your life that they will know the performances of every team in the division and exactly what is needed to match or better them. If Dave can get his strongest line up out regularly, and certainly for key matches, then this could prove to be a very strong team this year. Darren Taylor will lead the line and will be joined in the top half of the team by son Josh. Micky White comes into the team in the No.3 position and his performances will be a key factor if the team are to be successful. Micky has been gradually improving since he joined the club last year and we expect him to spring a few surprises this year. Here's hoping that his job on the new Seaforth Container Terminal lasts at least until the end of the season. Dave himself will move down to No.4 and should not lose too many games in that position. The team also have strong back up with Southport league player Jules Dutch available as well as good support in the form of Keith Dudley, Albert Parker and Billy Clayton from the G Team. Definitely expect a top 3 finish.... and maybe even top spot! No pressure then!  **G Team - Division 5**  Des Logan, as captain of the G Team, has the toughest job in the Club. Although he has a large squad his difficulty will be in finding a consistent 4 who can put in good performances week on week. Keith Dudley has improved tremendously over recent seasons but playing at No.1 will still be tough. We expect him though to be the most consistent member of the team and to improve on last seasons 50% average at this level. The much improved Tom Bell faces a little time out to recover from surgery and Cyril Penny remains side-lined due to shoulder injury. If both are able to return to active competition it will make a big difference to the team. Both Albert Parker and Billy Clayton are only expected to play part time this year, and their contributions would make a big difference if they appeared in the team colours regularly as both are well capable of winning a significant number of games at this level. Barbara Alcock and Des will also support the team and are capable of contributing to the points tally. The remaining team members Mary Delamere, Liz Adams and dear Don Gibson will struggle to win games but will be competitive throughout. Last year the team finished bottom of the pile, so any improvement in that will be an achievement. They have the players to improve their position, but the big question is whether Des can get them out to play, and whether they can stay injury free!  **Conclusions**  All that remains is to wish all of our teams well for the new season. It looks like being another long and tough season for all of our teams, but there is no doubt that they will be competitive and will show the best spirit of sportsmanship throughout, making any match at Marine an enjoyable but competitive occasion. | | | | | |  | | | |  |
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