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A doubles match can be played as a decider should there be a 'draw' on points. As the competition is on a handicap basis players of every level have an equal opportunity to shine. Bath Street has a very strong tradition and track record in this competition, being the current holders of the trophy, and this year has 6 teams in action.    *Reigning Frank Murphy Cup holders Tony Kendall, Ted Cramsie and Barry Davis (captain) will start the new competition as Bath Street Marine 1 as they set out to retain the title in the 1st Round of the 2015 event.*  **BSM 1**  BSM 1 started their campaign to hold onto their crown on Tuesday with a home fixture against CADWA 2. Unsurprisingly Barry Davis has had his handicap revised this year so the team of Barry, Tony Kendall and Ted Cramsie started off with a combined handicap of just +23 compared to last seasons combined total of +50. From the start they had their work cut out to retain their grasp on the cup because of facing a massive 238pt handicap gap to make up. Team captain Barry described the task of chasing down this total as a 'relentless pursuit', but the team showed their grit and determination by sticking relentlessly to their task. In the end the match proved uneventful with the home side winning out 401pts to 378 winning all 9 singles sets convincingly. Last years winners through to the 2nd round.  **BSM 2**  It seems that BSM 2 have a point to prove! Runners-up in last year's competition the team of Ken Jackson (captain), Ricky Brown and Darren Taylor with a combined handicap of just +6 faced a difficult away trip to East Wavertree on the opening night of the competition. The East Wavertree team also had the handicap advantage which meant the visitors had a deficit of 76pts to make up. But Ken showed right from the start his experience and class in this kind of tournament dispatching his first opponent by a 29pt margin, and continued the theme throughout his 3 matches cutting 81pts off the deficit. In effect East Wavertree would have needed to match the visitors point for point in all remaining games to make the handicap advantage work, and although they were able to eke out a 13pt bonus from Darren, Ricky was not in the mood to give any similar ground taking another 58pt advantage from his 3 sets. Overall therefore it turned out a convincing win for the visitors by 356 points to 306. The second of last year’s finalists also through to the 2nd round. | | |  | | --- | | as Veterans launch the New Year  **BSM 3**  BSM 3 consisting of Ian McElwee (captain), Fred Bainbridge and Dave Noden also faced a tough away trip to East Wavertree on Thursday evening. But with an interesting combined handicap of +46 and a completely new team line up this was going to be a hard match to call. However an unexpected turn of events settled the matter! Whether it was the result on Monday or just news of the strong Bath Street team due to visit, on the match day the Secretary of East Wavertree called conceding the match! No one likes to win matches that way, but sometimes it just cannot be avoided. So a third team through for BSM.  **BSM 4**  BSM 4 comprising of Dave Stoddern (captain), Rob Peat and Colin Mitchell were forced to call in a last minute substitute for Dave, in the form of Graham Turner, for their match on the opening night. The loss of the team captain is always a blow and can sometimes affect the team, but at least it added 5 points to the handicap giving the team a combined handicap of +52. However facing an away trip to the sometimes hard to find Sefton Park Club, at least that was Graham's experience - getting lost on route, and finding on arrival that they faced having to make up a handicap difference of 178 points this was going to be a tough evening. Needing to restrict the opponents to no-more than an average of 10 points per game the visitors started off well enough with the first 4 matches yielding just 79pts to the opponents - right on target. But after a brief break for refreshments the second half of the match started off badly with first Graham conceding 28pts and then Colin unexpectedly dropping a game and conceding 35pts. What was it that Sefton Park had put in the Christmas cake? A little bit of ground was recovered in the next set with Graham dropping just 14pts to leave it still possible for the visitors to close the gap. But there is often a difference between theory and reality when the pressure is on. Although Colin and Rob won the last 2 singles a further game dropped meant that by the last set the mathematics were impossible for Rob and the visitors. A good match with Sefton Park 3 winning out 450pts to 416.  **BSM 5**  Brian Crolley valiantly stepped in at the last minute to captain a BSM 5 side of himself, Billy Clayton and Julia Cornish. From the outset their combined handicap of +133 looked a little light against the very experienced line-up of Marconi 1 on +19. Brian was able to win one singles and take a game off another of the visitors finishing the night with a total of 99 pts for and only 109 against, but "we did not have the fire power" said captain Brian to score the needed average of 12pts per game to make the handicap difference of +114 work. Brian reports though that it was a great match with enjoyable company in which both Billy and Julia did very well getting on average 10pts per game. In the end however the visitors triumphed by 379 points to 342.  **BSM 6**  Friday saw the last of the clubs teams in action. BSM 6 captained by Des Logan and comprising on the night Albert Parker, Liz Adams and Ned Hassan (a late substitute for Tom Bell) with a combined handicap of +193 faced a tough task at home to a strong Arriva 2 side on a rather surprising +176. The 17 point start was all but erased in the very first set of the night and by the end of the fourth set Arriva 2 had moved into a 29 point lead. By the time the final set came, the home side needed all 42 points for a win, and for the visitors not to score any! A tall order indeed, but Ned gave it his best shot completing his third match victory for a personal clean sweep on the night. However the 32 pts scored by the visitors in this last match ensured that they finished the night ahead. Overall it was a good match, finishing 4:5 in sets in favour of the visitors who won by 502 pts to 471.  Here's the irony! Teams 1,2 and 3 all through to Round 2. Teams 4, 5 and 6 all out! Maybe we didn't get the balance quite right.....? Still a good achievement to get half of the club's teams through to the second round. | | | | | |  | | | |  |
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