

League Controllers Report

We have reached the turn of the year, although by a quirk of the schedule some of the key first half fixtures lie ahead in January before we really know whether the league is done and dusted, or whether it will go right down to the wire, (or from a personal viewpoint April 16).

In Division 1 Bourne End 1 have made the fast start expected of a team strengthened over the summer by the transfer from Wycombe and Hazlemere of Colin and Sam Walker and the addition of FM Paul Cooksey in search of some new opposition away from the mundane fare of the Berkshire League. FM Andrew Smith has yet to put in an appearance but the team's strength in depth has seen them ease to 4/4. They are not, however, the league leaders. That honour goes to Berkhamsted who have been dishing out heavy punishment (mostly 5-1 margins) to any sides slightly below par, and are on 4/5 with a superior games difference. Their only loss being a heavy defeat to the defending champions when themselves minus two top boards. Duncan Irvine who last year struggled to get a match for Aylesbury has eased into the top half of the Berkhamsted side to good effect.

Wycombe and Hazlemere started the season as outsiders to retain their title having only added Israeli junior Guy Moss to their team. After warming up with comfortable wins over Bourne End 2 and Berkhamsted the title defence suffered a blow with the customary loss at home to Aylesbury. More problems were to follow with a unexpected home draw against Slough. Still a win away to Gerrards Cross means they go into 2012 with an outside chance albeit needing an Olympian effort home and away against Bourne End. Matt Saunders continues to impress amidst the chaos with 5/5 this season, to add to his 8/11 last year.

Of the rest Aylesbury are in a transitional season as the impact of school, health and new jobs mean changes to the availability of much of the core side. They have defaulted one match at Slough and to date can boast just the win over Wycombe & Hazlemere for their efforts this campaign. Slough have settled in nicely and pose a formidable challenge when at full strength. Gerrards Cross by contrast are struggling to maintain the high standards of last season. Bourne End 2 were reprieved at the discretion of the league controller but haven't managed to field their strongest sides which would have given them a fighting chance, and sit bottom of the table.

In Division 2 the fixture list has been rather disjointed as a result of the withdrawal of a couple of teams, but that won't unduly concern Gerrards Cross 2 who maintain some of the impressive form of last year. The top spot is however held by Bourne End 3 who have benefitted from the trickle down effect of the new players joining the first team. There is a cash prize for winning the division, but it remains to be seen whether teams will want to take the promotion place which is theoretically on offer (though league structure may take priority). And some people can combine administration with good chess – Fred Day has a 100% record to date.

It only remains for me to wish everybody a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

JT Melsom

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