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OF THE

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TABLE DIGEST TENNIS

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Vol. 19

NOVEMBER, 1968

No. 1.

Editorial

Another season is now under way and the time to produce another issue of the "DIGEST" has arrived and much to my surprise, and probably most other people's as well, I find myself still in the Editorial chair and faced with the prospect of producing five more 'readable' editorials. However, I had better get straight on with the job or we will never get the "DIGEST" out.

The Merseyside 'Open' has already taken place and as usual was very successfully staged by our Tournament Referee. What was not so successful, however, was the performance of our junior players, for none of them succeeded in making any decent progress at all. This is bad news for our selectors, for it is from these juniors that they look to for our future Youth and Senior teams. So acute is the shortage of good youth players that the selectors have had no choice but to use the same players as last season with no alternatives being available. The position is often made more acute by the failure of eligible players to include their date of birth on their registration forms. If you have any promising youth players in your club let the Youth Rep. or Match Sec. know about them. In this way you will be helping not only your players, but also the League itself. We often, and rightly so, criticise our Selectors, for healthy criticism is the backbone of any organisation and in regard to the Youth team our Selectors would, I am sure, wish that they were in a position to be criticised.

We welcome into the League this season Bradstones, All Saints, National Giro, S. Katharine's College and that well-known club Cheshire Lines. I hope that they will all be with us for many years to come. Following the usual comings and goings the team strength appears to be equal to last season's.

So much for the mixed teams. But what about the Women's Division? Here the picture is entirely different. Three clubs out, another reduced to one team and only two new entrants. One of whom (Liverpool Y.M.) went six weeks without a match. That we can only produce a Women's division of nine teams is surely ridiculous and we must take positive steps to have the position improved as soon as possible. I personally think we should look into the question of reducing the Women's teams to three-a-side next season. This would have the immediate effect of reducing the number of women needed to register a team to 4 players. I hope that the women players will not be slow to express their opinions regarding this problem through the medium of this magazine.

Finally, I would like to thank Louis Hoffman for his very kind offer to run a competition in connection with his advert on the inside cover, which is now back to normal. Details of this competition will be found on Page 16.

Lancashire & Cheshire League

By J. R. Green

The season opened with a good win for our Men's 1st team, who beat Mid-Ches. 6-4, despite the absence of Gordon Birch. The selected team of Gordon Birch, Peter D'Arcy and Bruce Cain was, as always, hotly criticised, but the criticism is always welcome, for it does show some interest in the City team. D'Arcy and Cain each won two of their singles as did George Smith, who stood in for Birch. This was followed by a 7-2 win over Preston, in Rnd. 1 of the Wilmott Cup. Pete D'Arcy was the star of the match, winning his 3 sets in brilliant fashion. Gordon Birch won 3 also, and Cain added one.

Four days later the same trio did duty against Manchester, where they ran into trouble, and lost 4-6 to a strong Manchester side. Birch and D'Arcy each won 2 and Cain none.

Their next outing is on Nov. 30th at English Electric in a match v. Burnley, followed by a Wilmott Cup, Round 2 effort against Blackburn, also at Eng. Elec. We have to fit in a Norman Cook Trophy match, also at home, before Dec. 1st in addition to the above, so we look like being busy. For this latter game the 1st team will be assisted by Barbara Cain (Liverpool Y.M.).

The Men's 'A' team, consisting of Trevor Owens and Roy Smith (both Wav. Lab.) and Frank Bailey (L'pool YM) started off with a fine 6-4 win over Manchester 'A' with Owens and Bailey each winning 2 and Roy Smith 1. Owens and Smith won the doubles. This was followed by a 4-6 loss against Bury, in which Owens won 2, Bailey 1, and Smith, disappointingly, 0. It has been a fine start for 17 year-old Frank Bailey, for whom it was a tough debut. Roy Smith has had an unfortunate start but, we hope, will recover his form very soon. The 'A' team travel to Blackpool on Saturday, Nov. 23rd with Ted Mandaluff (L'pool YM) in place of Roy Smith who is working, and we wish them well.

The Ladies 1st team had a 6-4 win also to start the season over the Warrington team in which Judy Crafter won 2, Barbara Cain 2, and Joyce Rrandall 2. Susan Lisle, the young English-ranked Junior defeating all our three girls. This was followed by a heavy defeat at

the hands of a strong Blackpool team 2-8, Barbara Cain and Mabel Francis each notching one win. Judy Crafter, who had a long drive through thick fog, had one of those disastrous nights, and lost all her three. The same trio will do duty against Preston (away) on Nov. 29th, when we hope for another win.

The Ladies 'A' team once again consists of Janet Rumjahn, Pam Fidler and Jean Mackenzie, and opened up with a 4-6 loss at Bury. This was an unexpected result, due mainly to the presence in the Bury team of Mrs. D. Johnson, the Cheshire County player, late of Stockport, who beat all our girls and who also won the doubles. Janet Rumjahn 2, and Pam Fidler and Jean Mackenzie 1 each, were our set winners; Pam and Jean lost the doubles. Their second match v. Bolton, at home, resulted in a win for our girls by the equally narrow score of 6-4. Janet and Jean each won 2 of their singles, Pam winning 1, and Janet and Jean won the doubles.

Once again this trio of girls are representing us in the Bromfield Trophy competition for Junior girls, and after a bye in Round 1, play v. Birmingham in Round 2 on Nov. 30th and we hope there will be some support for our side to help tip the scales against a strong Birmingham contingent headed by Jennifer Cornock, the highly ranked England junior.

The Youth team lost their opening match 3-7 to Wirral. We were represented by Frank Bailey (L'pool YM), Alan Dean (Linnets) and Alan Williams (Colonsay) who was playing in place of clubmate Ian Wensley. Bailey won 2 and Dean won 1.

The Juniors won well 7-3 v. Blackpool (away) and won six of the first 7 sets. Alan Williams (Colonsay) won 1, John Barton (Wav. Lab.) won 3, and Michael Jones (Wav. Lab.) won 2, with Williams and Barton adding the doubles. This looks like settling down into a good Junior side.

The next Junior match is v. Preston at Colonsay T.T.C., when the same team will do duty. This year this team plays under the captaincy of Alec Davidson, of Linacre, who must feel pleased with his charges in their opening game.

Merseyside Open, 1968

By Brian Leeson

With a convincing straight sets win, Denis Neale reversed the result of 1966 and became Merseyside Open Champion 1968 by defeating Mike Johns 11 and 4 in the Final at Dunlops on 26th October. Neale was lucky, however, to survive the semi-final round against Alan Hydes, when he found himself well behind in the third set. He just managed to catch up and take it 21-18, so ensuring his place in the Final. Neale had also defeated the previous holder, Kevin Forshaw, 12 and 9, in the quarter-final.

Mike Johns had beaten J. K. Clarke in a three setter in his quarter-final before beating the Leeds player, Peter Hirst, 13 and 18 in the semi.

Judy Heaps successfully defended her Women's Singles title without forfeiting a single game to any opponent. Again this year she beat Maureen Heppell in the Final, having disposed of Cynthia Duncombe in her semi.

The Men's Doubles event provided at least two unexpected results, both involving the pairing of Trevor Taylor and Laurie Landry. First of all these two defeated the second seeds, Brian Burn and Alan Hydes, 21-15, 12-21, 21-12 in the semi-final, and then continuing the good work, they took the Doubles title with a nail-biting 22-20, 17-21, 24-22 win over the top seeds, Ralp Gunnion and Denis Nelle. Gunnion and Neale had not lost a set in this event until the Final.

Judy Heaps and Diane Simpson won the Women's Doubles title with a 21-13, 18-21, 21-7 victory in the Final over Cynthia Duncombe and Maureen Heppell. With only eleven pairings to compete in this event, the result was really a foregone conclusion. In fact, the total in the

Singles was just over two dozen, a very disappointing entry. The Men's entries, with just over 150 competitors, however, was more encouraging, and of course there was more chance of surprise results to excite the spectators.

The Mixed Doubles title went to the top seeded pair, Alan Hydes and Maureen Heppell. They defeated Mike Johns and Diane Simpson in the Final rather easily, 21-14, 21-10.

Trevor Taylor, nationally ranked as No. 1 Junior, took the Junior Boys' title with a 10 and 17 win over Paul Freeman of Durham, while in the Junior Girls' event, Linda Bashford, the Yorkshire County Junior, produced a surprise win over the No. 3 in the country, Jennifer Cornock of Warwickshire, 21-14, 21-14.

The Veterans' title went to Ray Hinchliff, who defeated Stephen Nunn 14 and 10 in the Final.

As Tournament Referee I would like to thank everyone who assisted at Dunlops, officially and unofficially. The same people seem to offer their help each year, and they are not all members of the Liverpool League. However, I do sincerely express my appreciation for their invaluable help and I hope they all felt that their hard work was really worth while.

The Tournament was memorable this year also for the attendance of the full England Selection Committee, some of whom actually took part in the events. I believe they were all favourably impressed with the playing conditions and the general amenities. I hope that as a result of this experience we will be favoured with further visits from senior ETTA officials at future tournaments.

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Last Season . . . and this . . .

By Philip Reid

First I would like to say 'Thanks' to Ken Armson for his very kind remarks in the concluding issue of the "DIGEST" last season. I always find the "DIGEST" full of interest and the Divisional Notes, which I always read with great interest, are never 'skipped' by me. When I met Judy Crafter at Scarborough last year I was able to talk about the Liverpool League, I think fairly fluently, even though I've never played in it. Whilst on about Judy—congratulations, Judy, on landing the coaching appointment at Minehead. Lesley Proudlock, that well-known player from the other side of the Pennines tells me it is really wonderful, meeting so many people. No doubt it will have been hard work, but great fun all the same.

What about last season? Well, my trips up and down the country gave me the impression that it was a happy season all round. Virtually no service trouble for a start. Nothing seems to build up an unhappy atmosphere quite as quickly as service trouble. Being called, using doubtful ones, etc. The fact that there was little of this—commonsense all round seemed to prevail—made for a good start. The tantrums which have become such an unfortunate part of our game seem to have lessened. Certainly at tournaments they seemed on the decline. Sportsmanship was the winner here. Can I say a few words here to Mr. Davies of L'pool Pirates club? I enjoyed your letter Mr. Davies and the interesting points you made. They were so realistic and down to earth. The attitude of young players is the bit I'm specially interested in. I suspect the modern high-speed game has something to do with tension. The ball is served and then it's usually speed, speed, speed. Concentration of a high level and the excitement of it must build up nervous tension. I always encourage my players to relax before

and after a game. And between points too. The point is that the more relaxed a player is the better he is likely to be. I am not sure that an easy solution is possible. If they are dedicated they are bound to be more disappointed if they lose for the simple reason they are keen to win! Poor sportsmanship—on and off the table—must not be allowed to cloud disappointment and players have to learn to take it when they lose. After all, there are only two players in a set and only one is going to win. I think the only answer is to clamp down on outbursts in the early stages. Players must, of course, be encouraged to fight but at the same time to lose in a sporting manner. This, however, becomes increasingly difficult and I can sympathise with those who have the job of doing this. I would hasten to add that the fact I encourage my players to relax doesn't mean I'm always successful. A coach is no more likely to be able to control a player on the table than a football manager to a footballer of suspect temperament once he gets on the field. It is I'm afraid a problem which will be forever with us. Early on in this paragraph I said tantrums were on the decline and I appear to have done nothing but contradict this statement since then. I still believe, however, things are improving in this direction.

This season—who knows? Will any new names emerge on the scene to challenge our established stars? I think one will. Jill Shirley, the talented Buckinghamshire girl, still a junior next season. Watching at Folkstone at the excellent English Junior Open I thought Jill had everything. A good all-round game, bags of fight, an intelligent game. She could, as they say, 'Come Good' this season.

Well—to all readers of "Table Tennis Digest"—have a good season's table tennis!

The Wavertree Labour's outing to Blackpool was a rousing success for all concerned, with the notable exception of one club secretary. Despite all his organisation and hard work, every member of the Y.M. and Eng. Elec. teams reached home safely.

Reflections on another "Open"

By Keith Fitzsimmons

The 4th Montgomeryshire Open.

This event which is rapidly becoming very popular with Liverpool league players, was held in Welshpool on Sunday, 17th November, with a stronger than usual contingent from Liverpool attending—one third of the total entry of 65. This tournament is unusual in so much as they only have a Men's Singles event, and if there is time, which was the case this year, a Men's Doubles. No play takes place in the Doubles event until after the Singles Final.

The conditions were not very good, the only lighting being provided by strip lighting and chandeliers, and a very slippery floor which tended to upset many of the players. Only four tables were used and following a number of complaints on the condition of one of them it was later withdrawn. It certainly helps one to appreciate how good our own tournament conditions are and the amount of work which is put in by various people to maintain these conditions. However, in spite of this, I think that next year will see another increase in the Liverpool entry as our local players do well there.

George Smith was the first L'pool player to find himself in trouble, mainly due to the conditions. In a first round match he scraped home at 19 in the 3rd against one of the local players. Two other Y.M. players, Dave Piper and Frank Bailey, both went out to Graham Williams, last year's runner-up to Gordon Birch. Another young Y.M. player, Frank Brown, had the sort of draw every player dreams about and he made the most of it cruising through to the semi-final to play Gordon Birch.

The other two semi-finalists were Peter D'Arcy and Wally Allanson. Peter had an easy passage to the semi but Wally had some tough matches, including a good win over Graham Williams in the quarters. The two semi-finals were won comfortably by Peter and Gordon—Peter looping far too well for Wally to cope with it and Gordon playing well within himself for an easy victory over Frank Brown.

And so to the final, and a triumph for Pete D'Arcy. He beat Gordon in the third after a hard struggle in which his main tactic was top-spin down Gordon's backhand. Gordon was a little slow on his feet and Pete made full use of this to ensure a very satisfying victory for himself.

After his victory Peter was coerced into buying a round of drinks for 7 or 8 of the L'pool players, including Gordon and myself, which is why I mention it, and he didn't mind buying one little bit. Afterwards we returned to the tournament for the doubles event. This again produced good results for the Liverpool contingent and Gordon and Peter emerged as the eventual winners. So, generally speaking, the day was a good one for Liverpool table tennis.

"Digest" Publication Dates

In order to assist Divisional writers and members wishing to send in material for publication the probable publishing dates for the next four issues are given below. Divisional Notes and other material for publication must reach me not later than 15 days prior to publication date.

Issue No. 2. 23rd January, 1969
Issue No. 3. 20th February, 1969
Issue No. 4. 27th March, 1969
Issue No. 5. 22nd May, 1969
(or earlier if possible).

Wedding Congratulations.

We offer our congratulations to Tony Green and Marion Little who were married on September 21st, two days before the start of the season. Tony, when asked if he would be playing in the first match of the season replied, "I don't think so, the wife wants a honeymoon and she says it won't be the same without me."

Seriously though, all the best to Tony and Marion who have taken up residence in Warrington, but are continuing to play for Linnet's.

Net Cords

By John Molyneux

It is with great sadness that I note that despite the scoop contained in this column at the end of last season, Peter D'Arcy has decided to carry on for one more year. Rumour has it that the terms offered him this season, i.e. censorship of Gordon Birch's 'Match Reports' in their score-book and the sales concession for the club have lured him back into the limelight.

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Whilst on the subject of English Electric may we wish them the very best of luck in the Lancs. & Cheshire three-a-side league. I'm glad to see that the choice of George Smith as reserve squashes the rumour that Y.M.C.A. players were not to be considered as their parent club charges too much for refreshments at representative matches!

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The 1st Division these days is rapidly developing into two groups, one consisting of the leading three teams trying for honours, and the rest fighting against relegation. One idea rapidly gaining popularity is that of a three-a-side Premier league, mainly amongst those who think they should be in it.

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You might recall some rather unpolite words I used about Eddie Birch after his great 'non-match' with Eddie Clein last season. I can now announce that he has finally grown into manhood, after 70 minutes of torture he finally beat Eddie Clein. After the game, one of the players, caught up by the uncontrollable atmosphere of indifference, summed it all up by saying "That's not Table Tennis!" Quite right.

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At the Handbook Meeting, Ernie Sturgess of Lussac, pleaded with teams to make a prompt start. His own clubmates took his words so much to heart that they apparently refused to turn up at all rather than be late. Obviously they believe that it is better not to travel than to arrive!

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How long before the torrents of complaints about the slightly re-arranged structure of the League pour in? About time some team realises it's going to finish bottom of their league.

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Last season's third and fourth division champions have one consolation this year — they might not have gained promotion because of the new League structure but at least they are able to defend their championship. (Who said "some consolation?").

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Last season Eddie Cameron stirred it up between 3A and 3B by stating that Division 3B clubs shouldn't have bothered entering the Hyde Cup. From the results of the 1st Round it seems a pity that they did this season, that is if you're a member of the cup-holder's team, or of Bath St. 'A' for instance. Well, Eddie?

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Who says that the power of the Press is on the decline? Note that advert and remember my words of last year. I wonder what we can achieve next, a ban on bad-tempered losers perhaps?

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It has already been opionated in another publication, one rather more widely read than this one, that the finals of the 'Open' proved rather an anticlimax. Even John O'Sullivan failed to live up to his past endeavours, including no somersault off the platform whilst supposedly taking photos. This year he merely turned the Mixed Doubles Final into the Mixed-up Final. However, suggestions that his hair got into his eyes whilst scoring should be completely discounted!

Letters to the Editor

6 Winchester Ave.,
Liverpool 22.

DEAR SIR,

Having just received my handbook I was dismayed to see that we were still in Division 4B after finishing a very close runner-up last year. I realise that one second division has been dissolved meaning that certain teams have received relegation that they did not earn, and this is the only thing that could happen, but surely if a team earns promotion they should receive it.

The object of having a twin-stream system is to make promotion faster to the higher divisions, but in this instance we have been completely halted. Surely under Rule 22 promotion should be made irrespective of the divisional set-up. I would like clarification on this point from the committee. The fact that there are less teams above us in the league to my mind is not promotion.

Our team at the moment is the same as last year and can only get stronger and I am sure we could more than hold our own in the third division. We were so keen on promotion last season that the same five played in every match, irrespective of illness, etc., and to now find all this was in vain is very frustrating to put it mildly. I am sure other teams who were expecting promotion will feel the same.

Can I please have the views of the Management Committee on this matter ?

Yours sincerely,

BOB ALCOCK
(Bootle Y.M.C.A.).

The Fixture Secretary replies

Promotions and relegations were carried out last season in the normal fashion with the top two changing places with the bottom two of the division above. We then took the top half of 2A and 2B to make the new Division 2. The bottom half became 3A and 3B and to the above were added the top halves of the following division.

Mind you, if you read Div. 3A notes it will be seen that "those two" have been at it again!

DRAW TICKETS

In due course you may be asked to sell draw tickets for the Lincolnshire Handicap on behalf of the E.T.T.A. I would like to point out that for every ticket you sell 3d. will be credited to the funds of the Liverpool League. This could prove very lucrative and the League (particularly the Treasurer) ask for your full co-operation.

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Around the Divisions

DIVISION 1.

By Jim Green

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
L'pool YMCA	6	6	0	0	58
Eng. Elec.	6	6	0	0	52
Rafters	6	3	1	2	36
W'tree Lab.	5	4	1	0	36
Colonsay	6	2	2	2	30
Beauclair	6	3	3	0	26
Cadwa	6	3	3	0	25
L'pool YM 'A'	5	3	2	0	24
Wav. Lab. 'A'	6	3	3	0	23
Bath St.	5	1	4	0	21
Mossley Hill	5	0	3	2	18
L'pool YM 'B'	6	0	5	1	18
Wav. Lab. 'B'	6	1	5	0	12
Linnets	4	0	3	1	11

Even this early in the season the ultimate championship revolves between two clubs, Liverpool YMCA and English Electric, of whom the YMCA seem to have the edge. As yet they have lost only one set, as a result of Peter Turtle's defeat by Eddie Birch (Wav. Lab. 'A'), while the Eng. Elec. side have lost six. But this can change fairly rapidly and the issue is very far from settled.

The most surprising thing about this season is the ease with which Wavertree Labour have surrendered their championship. Admittedly they lost the services of Tony Rigby, their No. 1, who returned home to Preston during the close season, but the whole team seems to have lost its determination to win, and it is difficult to understand the motives. Perhaps they may pull themselves together yet in defence of their title, but I'm afraid that the gap between themselves and the YMCA will prove a very difficult obstacle to overcome.

The YMCA were fortunate in the return of Ron Jones to competitive play and in the acquisition of Nick Gourlay who has yet to drop a set in 1st team appearances. Their three teams are all fairly strong, the newly-promoted 'B' team being all juniors and near juniors.

Colonsay, another of the promoted teams, have introduced a number of new players into the 1st Division, but are experiencing happier results than on their last brief appearance amongst us. Cadwa, also from the 2nd Division have a majority of their old stalwarts, but with YMCA, Eng. Elec. and Wav. Labour among their

first four opponents it is impossible to gauge their strength.

The fourth of the promoted teams is Wav. Labour 'B' and since they include Alan Tolson and Ken Chambers, they should finish up with a respectable points tally.

Mossley Hill have lost John Millward (not playing in Liverpool this year) and Eric Youd to English Electric, but with 14 points from their first 3 games they don't seem dismayed. Linnets are short of Frank Thomas, who still undergoes hospital treatment for his arm. Nevertheless they appear to be cheerful, as their 5-all draw at Rafters would indicate.

Wally Allanson, who signed for Beauclair on his return to Liverpool, has strengthened their side out of all knowledge, and they are booked for a higher place in the Division than for some years.

DIVISION 2.

By Grahame Reid

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
Trinity	6	4	1	1	43
W'loo Park	6	5	1	0	40
Colonsay 'A'	6	4	2	0	39
Eng. Elec. 'A'	5	5	0	0	37
Linacre	6	2	3	1	32
Sparta	5	2	1	2	30
Crawfords	5	4	1	0	29
Police	5	1	3	1	22
Eng. Elec. 'B'	6	0	4	2	19
University	4	2	2	0	18
Crawford's 'A'	4	1	1	2	18
Stanley House	5	0	4	1	14
Rafters 'A'	5	0	5	0	9
Linnets 'A'	2	0	2	0	0

Welcome to another season and what appears to be a very interesting one with our new look Division 2.

With Waterloo Park and Linnets 'A' back after one season in Div. 1, and having lost the bottom four teams in both of last season's 2nd Divisions our new Division has a very balanced look about it and interest in promotion and relegation seems likely to be sustained until next April.

With Eng. Elec. 'A' and Crawfords the only undefeated teams after four matches, and nobody yet having recorded a 10-0, although Eng. Elec. might have done if they had had five players against Rafters 'A'—it shows that no match will be easy and the strongest team each week is a must.

Eng. Elec., Linacre, Colonsay 'A' and Waterloo Park, of the former 2A teams, and Crawfords and Trinity of the 2B teams, seem the strongest sides in the Division and I expect the promotion battle to be decided amongst these six teams with the slight edge in favour of those formerly of 2A.

Eng. Elec. 'A', with Fred Pheysey still undefeated, beat Trinity 6-4, who in turn beat Linacre 6-4; Crawfords beat Colonsay and Waterloo Park 6-4 and when the latter two teams met Waterloo Park beat Colonsay 6-4, so things are certainly tight at the top, but by the halfway stage a clear favourite may have emerged.

Police, Crawfords 'A' and Sparta have that middle of the table look about them, although with Gray and Gould (Police) and Hollaway (Sparta) all players of considerable experience, Gray and Gould both winning their two in their clubs draw with Trinity, none of the higher teams will be able to treat them lightly.

What of the bottom clubs? — Linnets 'A' having lost a couple of last season's team to Knotty Ash and having to date not played a match appear to be finding it a struggle to field any sort of team at all. University with a couple of games in hand could well improve their position but they seem, apart from Alan Duncan, rather inexperienced as far as League table tennis goes. In the University-Waterloo Park match seven of the ten sets went to three games and five of these to deuce in the third of which University won only one set, altho' I don't expect University to beat Waterloo Park 9-1 in the return fixture with added experience the result could have been a lot closer.

Finally, in a recent match the first player of the home team did not arrive until 10 minutes past eight. That's not really good enough, is it?

DIVISION 3A By Eddie Cameron

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
W'loo Park 'A'	6	3	1	2	39
Bath St. 'A'	6	5	1	0	37
Police 'A'	6	3	3	0	34
Sefton	5	5	0	0	34
L'pool Jewish	6	2	2	2	33
Knotty Ash	5	3	2	0	29
Crawfords 'B'	5	3	2	0	26
Maghull	5	2	2	1	23
Cadwa 'A'	4	2	2	0	19
Vagabonds	4	1	2	1	18
L'pool Y.M. 'C'	5	0	5	0	16
Coll. of Tech.	6	0	6	0	11
University 'A'	3	1	2	0	11

Fate has been unkind to Bath St., Vagabonds and Sefton, all were sitting pretty at the end of last season looking forward to making a real challenge this term for Division 1 status. The annual meeting of the League changed all that and gave those two arch conspirators, the League Secretary and the Fixture Secretary, even more licence than usual to manipulate team placings and to make sure inequalities reign for yet another year!

If, however, fate has been unkind to the three teams in question it has given another chance to those other five teams from 3A who just missed the boat and who provided such entertaining opposition in the most even competition known in any division in recent years.

The new 3A includes three teams from last year's 2A, not relegated of course but re-shuffled, they are Police 'A', Liverpool Jewish and University 'A'. College of Technology (to give them their full title) are other newcomers, this time from 3B—they wonder just what their crime was to be committed to 3A and are already beginning to come around to the view that the "A" Division is the superior set-up. (Editor: Is Mr. Hankin still in 3B?) If so we look forward to a renewal of our feud).

NET CORDS

Elsewhere in this magazine you will see Brian Leeson's comments on the Merseyside Open, contained therein will be lavish praise for those who helped him during the tournament. However, one name missing from the list is that of Brian himself, nobody could work harder to ensure a successful tournament. Perhaps in a few years time his efforts will be crowned by seeing a local player emerge as the winner.

At this stage I usually indulge in my forecasts. I like the look of Sefton, they are not showing up as well as expected at this stage, there was a bit of inconsistency last season but the acquisition of Dave Murray from Knotty Ash strengthens them a lot. Bath St. 'A' did it last time, why not again? My 'old' friends John and Cyril do not seem any less efficient to me than before, they have taken John Mills from Colonsay, which should help. Waterloo Park were convinced that at fourth place last year they were below their true station and to prove it they are sitting out on top just now.

It has been 'all change' for Knotty Ash and their new look team appears capable of upsetting the best. What of Vagabonds? They did well last year, but somehow I think there were other teams capable of finishing above them last year and on this re-run they may not be quite as successful.

Considering the ex2A contingent, University 'A' with their special problems of continuity of playing strength look likely candidates for the wooden spoon. Lussac have dropped out and this will save College of Tech. from the drop. Liverpool Jewish and the Police will present a challenge to the top but may not quite make it. Working out my permutation from the above, and with my neck stuck well and truly out, I forecast promotion for Bath St. 'A' and Sefton.

Looking in at my old friends L'pool Jewish this week I was distressed to find their total disregard for visitors arriving before ten to eight still persists. I cannot recall gaining access to their premises (against any team) much before eight, and always it is a cold draughty night outside their gate. Once inside their cosy H.Q. the welcome is always equally good. It is well-known that they are always prepared to accommodate visitors' wishes, such as agreeing to the opposition playing in white shirts, making rounds of toast on cold nights or providing transport home, but, oh dear, how glad we would be to forego all that, just to get in at a reasonable time. (Note. I did get in once before 7-30 when I borrowed the key for a cup semi-final). How about their team prospects however?

They have John Dancaster at No. 1, back in the area after a break for several years and he will be well-known to many of you—an orthodox player, very steady, and will give them a good send-off. Jim Mangall is the essence of persistence and since making himself look more ferocious in his beard is more aggressive in his play and fills the No. 2 spot nicely. Malcolm Wiseman on his day has an attack to penetrate most defences. Dave Cohen, the old fox at No. 4, mixes his game well and keeps himself warm with three or four hearty smacks on his legs from his attacking follow-through. He would attack more but for the fear of permanent damage. Tony Cohen on the other hand does not believe in attack if defence will do, and it is doing very nicely for him so far. Altogether a useful blended team, final league placing about fourth, could be better, but enjoyable games are more important than medals.

DIVISION 3B. By Colin Stock

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
Colonsay 'B'	6	5	1	0	39
Trinity 'A'	6	4	2	0	37
Wav. Lab. 'C'	6	3	2	1	34
Beauclair 'A'	6	4	1	1	33
St. Edward's	5	2	1	2	30
Hilltop	6	2	3	1	29
L'pool Jewish 'A'	6	2	4	0	24
Orrell	4	2	1	1	21
Eng. Elec. 'C'	4	1	3	0	20
Bath St. 'B'	4	1	2	1	18
Panto	4	1	2	1	18
Palmerston	4	0	4	0	7

Welcome to the new improved, stronger Division 3B, stronger that is because of the change in the Divisional system. From last year's division we have lost College of Technology, University 'B' and Police 'B' and wish them the best of luck in their new divisions, while Beauclair 'C' and St. Elizabeth's have, unfortunately, withdrawn from the League. In their places, from last year's 2B, we welcome Jewish 'A', Colonsay 'B', St. Edward's, Palmerston and Beauclair 'A'. Crawfords 'C' (last year's 3B) and Linnets 'B' last year's 2B) were also placed in this division, but they too have now withdrawn leaving a total of twelve teams.

I'll probably regret this, but first of all let me stick my neck out by predicting Colonsay 'B' and Trinity 'A' for promotion (in that order), with St. Edward's and Wav. Lab. 'C' as their nearest challengers. Beauclair 'A' and Eng. Elec. 'C' may also do well.

It seems a pity after last season's magnificent struggle between Bath St. 'B' and Trinity 'A' that neither should be promoted. Bath St. have so far done very little to suggest that they will be amongst the contenders for the top spot, but perhaps this is not so surprising as they now field a much changed team from last year's. Trinity, on the other hand, started by winning their first four matches, but then slipped up by losing to Jewish 'A' and Colonsay 'B'. Apart from the signing of Terry Daly from Crawfords, who replaces Bailey, they have the same line-up as last year, and I cannot see any reason why they should not achieve similar results.

Trinity's main rivals are Colonsay 'B' who have lost only one match so far (to Beauclair 'A'). Apart from this match they have played and defeated other good sides including St. Edward's (7-3), Wav. Lab. (7-3) and Trinity (6-4). Their team includes D. Spencer, J. Riding, F. Gavin and Alan Guy, with each one

winning his share of the sets. With relatively easier fixtures ahead of them there could be no stopping this side.

Wav. Lab. 'C' could well be the surprise packet of the division if they could only show a little more consistency. They have had few changes from their usual side of John Hoban, Mike Jones (ex-Rafters), Brian Jessop, Bill Heron and Stan Russell. These five players were responsible for 8-2 victories over Jewish 'A' and Beauclair 'A', yet the same five were unaccountably defeated 9-1 by Eng. Elec. 'C'. Their most successful player to date has been the long-haired Russell, who has lost only one set, this being to the rather unorthodox style of Eng. Elec's. Alby Parker.

St. Edward's can turn out a very strong side, especially when R. Cook is available. Their only defeat so far has been to Colonsay, when O'Keeffe won two of his side's three sets by beating both Riding and Spencer.

At the bottom of the table we find Palmerston, who picked up only 7 points from their first four games, although may be they were unfortunate in meeting both W'tree and Trinity. Their most successful player has been Barry 'Barrel' Alexander whose victims include Tony Morris (Orrell), Bill Heron (W'tree) and E. Caryl (Hilltop).

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DIVISION 4A. By Ken Armson

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
Police 'C'	5	5	0	0	42
L'pool Jewish 'B'	6	4	1	1	39
L.Y.C.A.	6	3	1	2	38
Colonsay 'D'	5	4	0	1	37
Wav. Lab. 'D'	5	4	1	0	35
Eng. Elec. 'D'	6	2	2	2	33
Colonsay 'C'	6	2	2	2	30
Essemmay	6	3	3	0	26
Knotty Ash 'B'	5	2	3	0	24
Beauclair 'B'	6	2	4	0	21
Coll. of Tech. 'A'	5	1	4	0	16
Bath St. 'D'	5	0	5	0	10
Rafters 'B'	6	0	6	0	9

As my clubmates have graciously agreed to allow me to play regularly for our 'D' team (they can't put me any lower) I am now qualified to write these notes myself, even though most of the Labour Club are agreed that I am not much good at writing or playing!

The change-over to one 2nd Div. and the consequent demotion of some 3rd Div. teams has led to a marked improvement in the strength of the Division and, unlike other quarters, everyone in the Division appears quite happy with the position. L'pool Jewish 'B', L.Y.C.A., Beauclair 'B' and Colonsay 'C' who have joined us from 3A seem happy to find themselves in a division which offers them a good chance of success.

Whilst the Police have shown a marked improvement and now lead the division, Eng. Elec. 'D' have lost some of their strength and are now lagging behind the leaders. The main challenge to the Police will probably come from Colonsay 'D', as yet unbeaten, L'pool Jewish, who the Police have already defeated, L.Y.C.A. and W'tree Lab. 'D'. For although the Police are going extremely well these 4 Clubs are well in the running and these are early days yet.

The Jewish have just inflicted on the Labour Club their second defeat, again a score of 8-2, and whilst this has strengthened their position it is a severe setback to the Labour Club's hopes. The strength of the top clubs is fairly well balanced and we can expect these setbacks to become a regular feature of the Division. For example, Colonsay 'D' beat W'tree Lab. 8-2, but only drew with the L.Y.C.A. who were themselves beaten

8-2 by W'tree Lab., although it must be admitted they were without their No. 1.

The position in the Colonsay club is strange as there is no doubt that their 'D' team is far stronger than their 'C'. I would have thought that they would name their strongest team as the 'C', if only to avoid any squabbling next season if, as appears extremely likely, the 'D' team win promotion. Had some of their 'D' team been promoted last season to the 'C' it is quite on the cards that they could have avoided the drop to this Division. As it is, their promising juniors are confined to yet another season in the 4th instead of gaining more experience higher up.

In the lower half of the Division they are engaged in the annual battle to avoid the wooden spoon and, unlike other seasons, they are now faced with the prospect of relegation for the bottom team. Prior to the re-entry of Rafters 'B' I was ready to name Bill Marlow's team, Coll. of Tech., as the candidates but they have now placed the mantle firmly on the shoulders of Rafters 'B' and there, I am sure, it will remain for the rest of the season.

However, without wishing to put my foot in it, I have a feeling that Bill's team might prefer life as a successful team in Div. 5 to that of an unsuccessful one in 4A. Be that as it may, I see they are still in the Cup and the draw has favoured them, so they could well go forward to the last eight.

I see that we have quite a few of the 'top brass' in our Division, one of whom is probably the only non-playing lady captain in the Mixed Divisions, and as she is also the League Catering Officer, I, for one, am looking forward to a slap-up feed when we visit Beauclair!

DIVISION 4B. By Jack Lambert

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
Odyssey	5	5	0	0	42
Bootle Y.M.	4	4	0	0	35
Police 'B'	5	3	1	1	30
University 'B'	4	2	1	1	21
St. Edward's 'A'	6	4	2	2	21
Police 'D'	4	2	2	0	20
Mossley Hill 'A'	4	2	2	0	18
Bath St. 'C'	4	1	3	0	15
Knotty Ash 'A'	4	1	3	0	12
Orrell 'A'	5	0	5	0	11
Eng. Elec. 'E'	3	0	3	0	5

The start of the season for my team seems to be the saga of the division. First game v. Beauclair 'C'—dropped out. Second game v. Bootle Y.M., they were livid at not gaining promotion as per Rule 22. Third game v. Mossley Hill 'A'—team disintergrating on account of winning the league and staying in Div. 4. I know a Div. 2 less has meant re-organisation, but I am reporting what I found. Match four v. Stanley House 'A'—arrive to find the team had withdrawn. Add the withdrawal of Lussac 'A' and there you have what is undoubtedly a very sad start to the season, with us all minus matches for six weeks. Bootle Y.M.'s match night is now Monday and University is now on Wednesday.

Odyssey have so far continued their unbeaten run of last season and look a strong outfit, the clash between them and Bootle Y.M. this week should be quite interesting. Bootle have started even stronger than last season, and have now signed Ken Poulkes, although Bob Alcock is on the injured list. Let us hope his leg is not as bad as was first feared.

Godby's two wins for Mossley Hill over Bootle were top class—beating Ball 23-21, 21-18, and Alcock. The local derby between the Police teams saw McLeod, Rimmer and Garnett score doubles for the 'B', but Lawson, Christian and Dyson did well to take a set apiece from their senior team. Lil Upton scored a crafty double for Orrell against Knotty Ash 'A', who won 6-4, thanks to two good wins from Dunning.

University are our third new team and have had mixed success, losing 7-3 to Odyssey and beating Bath St. (Lloyd 2) by the same score, Price, Liu and Coles winning twice. Police 'D' look stronger than last season, only Hardacre surviving. St. Edward's and Orrell carry on with their mixed grill, with their strongest teams out regularly they could be quite a force. Bath St. not as good as last season, but a handy side, who always seem to be making signings out of the blue. Knotty Ash, not clicking as nicely as last season yet. The Eng. Elec. team appears to have real strength—they better have—as I reckon they will be holding the other 12 teams up for the season.

DIVISION 5A.

By Keith Fitzsimmons

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
Sandforth	5	3	1	1	35
Maghull 'A'	5	4	0	1	34
Sandforth 'A'	5	4	1	0	34
Waterloo Pk. 'B'	5	4	0	1	33
Bootle Y.M. 'A'	5	3	1	1	29
Police 'E'	5	3	2	0	26
L.Y.C.A. 'A'	5	2	3	0	22
Vagabonds 'A'	4	1	3	0	20
Cadwa 'B'	4	1	3	0	15
Palatine	3	1	2	0	15
Trinity 'B'	6	0	6	0	12
S. Katharine's	1	1	0	0	6
Mossley Hill 'B'	4	0	4	0	6

I was hoping to start these notes by saying welcome to the new season with a full Division at last, but it was not to be. From the original fourteen we have thirteen left which includes two latecomers to the League, Palatine and S. Katharine's College.

There are several teams who must fancy their chances for promotion this year, including last year's runners-up Sandforth. Following a tough start they received a walk-over from Police 'E', which I must say surprised me a little, for the Police are not a side to just not turn up. I wonder what happened here? If you want to win promotion: you can't afford to give one of your rivals 10 points.

Sandforth 'A' have also made a very good start to the season with three wins in their first three matches. I have heard it said that this team is as good as their 1st team—well they met in a league match recently and Sandforth won 6-4 in what must have been a close match. The rest of the teams going for promotion will have to watch out, for both Sandforth teams on their showing so far must have a good chance of finishing first and second.

Maghull 'A' will probably finish in 4th or 5th place. They are not in with a real chance of promotion, neither are they in any danger of finishing near the bottom. So far they are unbeaten, their hardest match being with Bootle Y.M. 'A' which ended in a draw—they have also won two matches 6-4. This, I feel, will be the pattern for Maghull. They will win a lot of matches but not by a sufficient margin to keep them in the promotion hunt.

Who's for the wooden spoon? I fancy the choice lies between Trinity 'B' and Mossley Hill 'B', but we will have to wait a little longer to find out who will finish bottom for both teams have played the same sort of opposition.

At the time of writing I have no information about S. Katharine's College. They could be on top of the division or they could be propping up Mossley Hill and Trinity. I won't know until I receive some score-cards of their matches. Talking about score-cards, I must congratulate Brian Philips (Vags. 'A') on sending in some exceptionally neat ones. Thanks, Brian!

Finally, a plea to all Div. 5A players. As I do not play in this Division I do not feel that I can do full justice to writing your notes, so if there is anybody at all who fancies 'having a go', please get in touch with the Editor as quickly as possible. It's really quite easy—after all it only took me three weeks to write this!

DIVISION 5B. By Theo Mills

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
Colonsay 'E'	4	3	1	0	27
All Saints	5	3	2	0	27
L'pool Pirates	3	3	0	0	24
Sparta 'A'	2	2	0	0	19
Odyssey 'A'	5	1	4	0	19
University 'C'	2	2	0	0	16
National Giro	2	2	0	0	15
Cheshire Lines	4	1	3	0	13
Vagabonds 'A'	4	1	3	0	13
Bradstones	5	0	5	0	7

I write these notes as a newcomer to this League but, admittedly, I'm enjoying myself sitting at the typewriter tapping away at full speed (10 words per minute). Incidentally, as the Editor pointed out to me, the creation of this new Division made it necessary to recruit someone to do these notes and this has been flung at me. What a way to start off!

It is difficult to make forecasts at this stage of the season, but I would put my money on Sparta 'A' taking this divisional title. Now, no comments, please. L'pool Pirates, Colonsay and Sparta 'A' are contesting for the top three positions, but, from all appearances, this will be a closely fought contest with nothing given away.

I am impressed with the performances of D. Burge (L'pool Pirates), W. Holmes (Sparta 'A') and Jill Lancaster (Colonsay) and will, I am sure, be hearing a lot more about these players as the season progresses. They are playing a vital role in keeping their respective teams at the top.

Bradstones, Odyssey, Vagabonds and All Saints have not had a good start but they need not feel too disappointed. The opposition is not weak but may be some hard practice might be the answer. Presumably they have been doing better lately, who knows, but let us wait and see what happens later on in the season. So cheer up lads!

I am afraid that I must conclude on a critical note and hope that someone will make a note of this for the future. Understandably, the creation of a new division involves many problems and I know the organisers did their best with the tools at their disposal. Quite a few people will agree with me that this is an expensive league; expensive because of the amenities which it provides, but, I cannot help feeling sad for a team playing one match and must wait for two or three weeks before playing another due to blank spaces in their fixtures. My team experienced this not long ago and may be others have. What is the reason for this? Too few teams in the division? May be someone will tell me. Just look at the League table and you will understand why I have brought up this point. At the time of writing the maximum number of games played by any one team since the commencement of the season is three.

I hope I have not offended anyone but if I have, it is not intentional but merely to bring this fault to someone's notice. May be in my next notes I'll be able to report more fully on this division, but at the moment I think I've covered a few bits.

(Editor: In reply to Theo. This division was formed specially at the the Handbook meeting to avoid disappointing anyone. Late entries of teams by old and new clubs cause complications at this meeting and it is only hard work by the Fixture and Organising Secretaries which get these teams any matches at all.

WOMEN'S DIVISION.

By Joyce Randall

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
Crawfords 'A'	3	3	0	0	29
Cadwa	3	3	0	0	28
Rafters	2	2	0	0	20
Colonsay	3	1	2	0	11
L'pool Y.M.	1	1	0	0	10
Crawfords	1	1	0	0	10
Colonsay 'A'	4	1	3	0	8
Linnets	2	0	2	0	2
Vagabonds	4	0	4	0	2

I open my first article for the "DIGEST" by pointing out that I have very little talent as a 'scribe'. No doubt my teachers would scream with laughter if they knew I had been 'asked' to take on this arduous task. However, down to the job in hand.

On reading my handbook, I found we had a wait of six weeks before our first match—it's a similar situation for all of you. With so many blank weeks to look forward to, it could prove to be a disastrous season for the Ladies' Division. What can we do about it? Some of you, I'm sure, must have given this matter some thought. If you have ANY ideas at all, regardless how small or 'way out' they may appear, please let me have them.

I would like to welcome Julie Roberts back to table tennis. She played her first match in eight years for the YMCA against Vagabonds and gave a good account of herself, winning both her singles, also her doubles. The young ladies who play at the Vagabonds have a gents'

changing room as th eir venue. I was a little surprised during the course of the evening when the games were stopped to allow the males to use their POWDER ROOM. Fortunately the bar was comparatively quiet on this particular night. I would suggest that some thought might be given to changing the sign on Ladies' match night.

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COMPETITION

As you will no doubt have noticed our popular advert on the inside cover of the magazine has returned. In conjunction with this return the advertiser, Louis Hoffman, is running a competition for the best four captions sent in by members to accompany the advert in the next four issues. Entry is open to all registered members of the League and you may send in as many entries as you wish. If you are not familiar with the form the captions take, get hold of some back issues.

The closing date will be December 31st, 1968, and a prize of one doz. 'Schildkrot' Table Tennis Balls will be sent to each of the four winners by Louis Hoffman. All entries to be sent to the Editor whose decision will be final. Please send your entries on a sheet of paper with your name, address and club on the reverse side.

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