

Federation of Crown Green Bowls

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Federation Focus – August

With the August fixtures completed the National League Season ended with just the Team Champion of Champions to be decided on 25th September with the intervening weeks given over to the Lancashire v Yorkshire Sixty-Plus team playoffs on the 2nd September the Team knockout on 11th September and the Individual Merit on 18th September.

The final National League matches have determined the positions in all the Divisions and the direction, up or down or stay-put, decided for many of the teams with the withdrawal of Preston "A" in mid Season complicating the situation somewhat.

In **Division One** two teams, Leeds and Halifax, started their last fixtures knowing that if they both were to win the best winners would become the Champions and it was Leeds who came out on top with their 25 – 7 win against Fylde "A" superior to Halifax's 21 – 11 win over Airedale and Wharfedale "A". Leeds played their home leg at Crossgates BC and had eight winners with Kevin Sidle (Cranmore) top scoring with his 21 – 6 result whilst best for Fylde were Joe Hibberson (St Annes) and Joe Carr (Park Club) who both won to thirteen. Over at the Raikes Hotel in Blackpool the Leeds away squad bettered their home colleagues by winning nine individual games with Mark Brain (Glasshoughton) having their best result (21 – 8) and Terry Wood (St Annes) and Dave Jenkinson (Pilling) both winning to nine for Fylde. Leeds picked up all eight of the aggregate points in the match to retain the Division One Championship whilst Fylde must face a return to Division Two. Player power helped to decide the home venue for the crucial match for Halifax against near neighbours Airedale and Wharfedale "A" with Brighouse Sports the choice and the ten home winners suggested that listening to the players was the way to go. Mark Regan made his knowledge of his own Green count by winning to nine and Gareth Nicholson (Mytholmroyd BC) was next best for Halifax with his 21 – 13 result whilst David Upton (Myrtle Park) and Martyn Benson (Rufford) were the two winners for Airedale 21 – 14 and 21 – 19 respectively. Meanwhile over at Farsley BC in Leeds the Halifax team got off to the worst possible start losing all of the first four jacks but then recovered well to take all the next four but won only one of the last four when another couple of winners would have presented a strong challenge to Leeds. James Hanson (Pudsey) had the outstanding home result for Airedale (21 – 5) and two of the visitors Clive Austin (Mytholmroyd BC) and Tom Gasson (Hove Edge) shared the honours for Halifax both winning to ten. Airedale & Wharfedale fell just one individual win short of retaining Division One status as they finished only one point behind Middleton with the Greater Manchester side having an inferior chalks difference. Barnsley consolidated their position at the top of **Division Two** in a close fought match against second placed Bury (BraTs) by winning 19 – 13 (437 – 421). In their home leg at Royston BC the Barnsley team had seven winners with Nigel McDermott (Dodworth) leading the way with his 21 – 11 result whilst for the visitors Paul Atherden (Tottington Cons) won to nine. Over at Whitefield BC both Bury and Barnsley had six winners with the aggregate two points shaded by Bury (216 – 209). Tops for Bury was Mitchell Toth (Openshaw) with a 21 – 8 result and for Barnsley Marcus Hill

(Penistone) also won to single figures (21 – 9). Both teams are heading upwards for Season 2017. Due to the withdrawal of Preston “A” there was only the one match played in this Division in August.

Going in to the August fixtures Colne Valley had a clear lead of nine points over Wallasey in **Division Three** and both teams had comfortable wins with Wallasey narrowing the gap but failing to topple the Huddersfield team. Colne Valley played their home leg at Meltham, the venue for many a Yorkshire County match, where they had seven winners against their West Lancashire opponents, Ormskirk, with Mark Atkinson (Crosland Moor) their top scorer (21 – 11) and Jimmy Fagin (Burscough RBL) best for the visitors (21 – 15). Over in Bootle at Walnut BC Colne Valley had eight away winners with Mark Wood (Lockwood Cons) leading the way with a single figure result (21 – 8) whilst for Ormskirk Billy McGee (BRNESC) had the same winning score-line. Final result Colne Valley 23 (451) Ormskirk 9 (410) with all eight aggregate points going to Colne Valley. Wallasey’s 26 – 6 (467 – 354) win against Furness was a brilliant result but only succeeded in reducing Colne Valley’s lead at the top by three points. Wallasey’s home leg was at Upton Victory Hall where they had ten winners with Craig Saville (New Brighton Queens Royal) their top scorer with 21 – 6 and for Furness their two winners were Paul Bennett (King Alfred) and Stewart Turnbull (Roose Community) 21 – 9 and 21 – 19 respectively. Up in Cumbria at Walney Park the Furness home team fared only a little better, with four winners, the best of which was Danny Rogers (Salthouse) with 21 – 9. The eight winners for Wallasey were led by Brian Leonard (New Brighton Quarry Vikings) with a commanding 21 – 4 result. Colne Valley and Wallasey continue their climb up the National League but Furness and Ormskirk will probably be looking for success at a lower level next year.

North Yorkshire had a sixteen point lead in **Division Four** when they met second placed South Lancashire in the final match. A closely fought encounter saw both teams each winning twelve of the twenty-four individual games played but the Yorkshire team were to pick up the four overall aggregate points to increase their lead at the top. North Yorkshire chose Low Harrogate as their home venue and it was two local players, Peter Syson and David Spilsbury with single figure wins to five and eight respectively who made a major contribution to their home win (228 – 191) with Paul Garnett (Botanical) best for South Lancashire with his 21 – 10 result. Meanwhile at Golborne Community four winners for the visitors helped to limit South Lancashire’s win to seventeen chalks helping North Yorkshire to take the overall aggregate points (429 – 407). Best for the home team at Golborne was Paul Clegg (Golborne S&S) with his 21 – 6 score-line whilst David Hodgson (Black Swan) was tops for the visitors (21 – 10). Both these two teams will be sampling bowling at a higher level in 2017. The other match in this Division was another Battle of the Roses with East Lancashire taking on Leeds “B”. A feature of this match was the large winning margins by the home teams, East Lancashire winning by eighty-two points and Leeds by seventy-two for the Lancashire side to take the overall aggregate (411 – 401) and win 19 – 13. East Lancashire played their home leg at the Alexandra in Blackburn and had ten winners with Harry Hargreave (Darwen Subs) restricting his opponent to just one chalk whilst for the visitors Andy Walton (Crossgates Rec.) was the best of the two winners for Leeds 21 – 12. Over in Leeds at Garforth Rec. the home team had nine winners and amazingly four were to the same top-score of 21 – 8 from Mark Hopps (Crossgates Rec.), Dave Waldron (Swillington), Lisa Winterburn (Tadcaster) and Neil Wood Jnr. (Chapel Street) whilst Dave Shawforth (Butlers) was best for East Lancashire with his 21 – 16 result.

Liverpool/St. Helens had a big win over Airedale & Wharfedale “B” (24 – 8) in **Division Five** to leapfrog Dudley and take the title with eight points to spare. The top two teams were both playing in the Federation National League for the first time and must be well pleased with their efforts. Liverpool/St. Helens played their home leg at the Gardeners Arms and finished with nine winners with joint top scorers, local player Rod Salisbury and Martin Keatley (Mossley Hill), both winning to seven. For Airedale & Wharfedale the best of their three winners was Andy Wood (Horsforth Woodside) with an impressive 21 – 4. Over in Airedale at Rufford the home team had five winners

with Chris Lodge winning to four whilst the best of the visitors was Wayne Jeavons (Tixall BC) with a 21 – 9 result. All the eight aggregate points went to Liverpool/St. Helens who finished with a total of ninety-six League points, an average of twenty-four per match, the best in the National League for all those teams playing four matches. Also in this Division Mon Menai consolidated their mid table position by beating Southport the team immediately below them by 22 – 10 (448 – 378). Menai's home leg was played at Llanfairpwll where they had eight winners with Stuart Thomas (Beaumaris) the top scorer (21 – 6) and with John Green (Crowlands) best for Southport with his 21 – 14 result. In Southport the home venue was Banks St Stephens and the individual points were equally shared with Chris Porter (Botanic) best for the home team (21 – 8) and Menai having two single figure winners in John Short (Bangor City) and Andrew Stanley (Beaumaris) conceding only three and four respectively. Again Mon Menai collected all the eight aggregate points. Up for promotion are Liverpool/St. Helens and Dudley.

The playoffs in **Division Six** between the top two teams in each of the regional sections, North West and Midlands/Yorkshire matched Bolton with Burton and Bradford with Fylde "B". Bolton staged their home leg at Hollywood Road and won ten of the twelve games, Steve Davies (Horwich RMI) the best of three single figure winners with 21 – 7, whilst for Burton Daniel Laughton (Con Club) with a 21 – 19 result was best for the team from the Midlands. At Newhall BC the Burton home team had a better result winning eight of the twelve games and also picked up the home aggregate two points. Best for Burton was Mark Gardner (New Inn) with 21 – 12 whilst for Bolton John Southern (Dobbies) top scored with 21 – 13. Bolton took the remaining six aggregate points for a final match score Bolton 20 (461) – Burton 12 (391). After a high scoring Season Bradford met Fylde "B" in the other playoff match and ended with a much closer result than their final winning score of 20 – 12 might suggest. Each team had twelve individual winners but Bradford took all the eight aggregate points including the two in their away leg by just four chinks (214 – 210). Bradford's seven winners in their home leg at Shipley Club included local player and top scorer Tracy Preston who won to nine with John Holyoke the best for Fylde winning 21 – 16. Over in Lancashire at Pilling BC the Fylde team also had seven home winners with Mark Audin (Raikes Hotel) leading the way with his 21 – 12 result and for the visitors Mark Cunningham (Shipley Club) having a tremendous result with a 21 – 3 win. Bradford and Bolton thus qualified for the Team Champion of Champions in Blackburn on 25th September joining the Champions of Divisions One to Five and the highest scoring runner-up which was Dudley with eighty-eight points.

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