

NEWSLETTER

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July 2018

A review of the past month, a preview of the coming month and more

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to **Bob Swan**
for sponsoring this
issue of the newsletter

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KNOCK-OUT CHAMPIONS KO'd!

Our five Individual KO competitions are now in full swing and it has not been a good experience for our reigning Champions with three of last year's winners already eliminated whilst the other two haven't begun the defence of their titles yet.

The three eliminated Champions all lost in the opening rounds with both of last year's Pairs finalists already eliminated by the same opponents! Lindley Lib pair Peter Hopkinson and Robert Morgan have already accounted for the all-Lockwood Con 2017 finalists of Dave Cooling & Dougie Duck (winners) and Eddie Haigh & Mick Cox (runners-up) and now must be favourites for the title as they go forward to the quarter-finals on Finals Day which will be played on 30 August at Almondbury Lib who are the 2018 competition sponsors.

In the Over-70's it is a similar story with both of the 2017 finalists already knocked out with Champion Eddie Haigh (Lockwood Con) losing to Jeff Jacklin (Kirkheaton Con) and runner-up Frank Greenwood (Golcar Lib) falling to Geoff Price (Milsbridge).

Over-80's 2017 Champion Eddie Hine of Kirkheaton C&BC started his defence of his title by inching through a Preliminary Round game 21-20 but then fell at the next stage when going down to Dennis Iredale of Rastrick in a re-run of a 2017 semi-final. Last year's losing finalist, Geoff Rollinson (Holmfirth), remains in contention progressing to the 20 July Quarter-Finals.

Still to start their defences of last year's hard won trophies are Tony Clegg of Crosland Moor who is our Rose Bowl Champion and Derek Sykes of Marsden Park who is the Lower Division Trophy Champion.

IN THIS ISSUE

The end of June signals exactly the half-way point of our League season so a good time to review how teams are faring this year. Our Half-Term Report is this month's supplement and looks at, and reports on, all our 83 teams.



GOLDEN JUBILEE UPDATE

The Sub-Committee looking at organising the marking of the Association's Golden Jubilee in 2020 continue to work through a long list of potential events. Thinking currently is to have two special events to mark the 50th anniversary, one at the start of the 2020 season and one at the end of that campaign.

To minimise the number of full gatherings during the season it is currently envisaged that the opening event would be included as part of the Annual General Meeting in February. There would be the business meeting followed by an introduction to the Golden Jubilee programme and a buffet for attendees. Potential venues are already being approached for this season launch event.

The end of season event is likely to incorporate the annual presentation of awards to our league, team and individual competition winners. We are looking for a suitable venue and potential speakers to mark the occasion and again a buffet is envisaged for all attendees.

The Sub-Committee is also keen to provide a memento of the anniversary for every League bowler with the most favoured suggestion being an engraved pen. Other suggestions are also being costed up before any decisions are taken. In addition the production of a Golden Jubilee mug is a possibility with a set being presented to each club. There is also a desire to, in some way, commemorate the fact that 14 clubs formed the first season of the league by presenting each of them still in existence and competing in our league with something to mark that fact.

It would also be appropriate to mark the occasion with a bowls match. A number of ideas are currently under review including a Champions v Rest of the League game for the Golden Jubilee Trophy or possibly a new individual competition which could be competed for annually thereafter. Also looking for suggestions for some additional and new individual awards - any ideas?

The Sub-Committee is keen to consult with clubs and bowlers in general to see what level of support is likely to be forthcoming for each suggestion. It is intended that each club will be asked to complete a short questionnaire stating their preferred options from a list of possible events and celebrations. This questionnaire will be sent out to all clubs by the end of July. It should be stressed that nothing is firmed up at all yet and this consultation will be highly influential in determining what the next steps will be.

Whatever options are progressed will all cost money and the Sub-Committee has a number of ideas about seeking sponsorship to minimise the impact on the League's funds. Clubs are also to be asked in that same questionnaire about what level of financial support they believe that they should be contributing to the Anniversary celebrations budget.

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CLUB REPS CORNER

I have had a couple of queries from clubs about signing new bowlers on in mid-season by asking if it is allowed. Yes it is. You can sign new bowlers on at any time as long as they aren't signed on for any other club in the Veterans League. New members move into the area all the time plus some club bowlers may decide that now is the right time to progress to veterans' league bowling plus some reach the qualifying age of 62 during the playing season so all these can all be added to your registrations. Transfers can also happen mid-season if there is a good reason to allow and both clubs are in agreement. Sometimes bowlers just aren't getting a game with their present club and could help out a team struggling to field a full team. We are here to provide competitive bowling for bowlers so we can be quite flexible in this area.

I have also had another query from a club asking to change one of their starred bowlers. This bowler is having a poor season and at the half-way stage has only won one of ten games played. The captain would like to give him a rest (i.e. drop him) from the A team but knows that if he does then, being starred, he is not eligible for the B team so would not get a game at all and would deprive the B side of an extra player when they don't have a lot of spare bowlers around. Common sense prevails and we agree an alternative bowler to replace this man as one of that club's starred bowlers.

There appears to be some confusion by a small number of clubs about submitting results of the team knock-out competitions. Some believe that the postcard size Result Card has to be forwarded to form the official record of that match. This is not the case. The same rules apply in KO games as apply in League matches. We only need a record of the result once. So if you submit the result using Bowlsnet, as I would encourage you to do, then the Result Card is redundant.

BCGBA VETERANS

All the best to David Singleton of Golcar Lib in his challenge of the finals of the BCGBA Veterans competition. David was one of two bowlers to progress from the Yorkshire Qualifying event held at Marsh United in May. He will be representing Yorkshire for the second time at the BCGBA Finals Day being held at Prees Cricket & Recreation Club in Shropshire on 4 July.

FANTASY LEAGUE

The Fantasy League season is in full swing as Kirkheaton Con bowler Kenneth Broadbent continues to lead the field. However Ken has already been eliminated in the parallel running Knock-Out1 competition. Lots of great Well Bowled vouchers up for grabs as interest continues right through the bowling season. Weekly updates on the HDVBA website.

INTER-DISTRICT UPDATE

Two good wins in June has set up our Inter-District representative team for an interest in the final outcome of the Yorkshire Veterans Inter-District League following our move up the table to second position. A 30-26 win over current Champions Bradford raised hopes and expectations and this was followed by our biggest win of the season against bottom-of-the-table Castleford. With our final two games being against the two favourites then our destiny is in our own hands.

RESULTS TO DATE

4 May v Wakefield - Lost 23-33
18 May v Skipton - Won 34-22
1 June v Bradford - Won 30-26
15 June v Castleford - Won 35-21

LEAGUE TABLE

	P	W	L	F	A	Pts
Halifax	4	3	1	1190	1064	136
Huddersfield	4	3	1	1163	1119	122
West Riding	4	3	1	1134	1064	121
Bradford	4	2	2	1133	1075	121
Wakefield	4	3	1	1132	1111	118
Leeds	4	1	3	1098	1180	97
Skipton	4	1	3	1099	1169	96
Castleford	4	0	4	1032	1199	85

FIXTURES

29 June v Leeds
27 July v West Riding
10 August v Halifax

JULY DIARY

Fri 6th	Rose Bowl (down to 8)
Mon 9th	Julie Fuller Trophy: Round 2
Thus 12th	Bistro KO: Round 3
Fri 13th	Hickson Trophy (in Castleford)
Thurs 19th	Team KO: Round 3
Fri 20th	Over-80's KO: Round 2
Thurs 26th	ROSE BOWL FINALS DAY
Fri 27th	Inter-District v West Riding
Mon 30th	Julie Fuller Trophy: Semi-Finals
Tues 31st	Sub-Team KO: Round 3

AUGUST NEWSLETTER

If you have registered to receive the monthly HDVBA Newsletter then the August 2018 issue will be arriving in your email inbox by

FRIDAY ** JULY

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YOUR NEWSLETTER

I am very grateful to Bob Swan of Cowcliffe BC for his sponsorship of this issue of the newsletter. If you would like to sponsor a future issue then it costs just £20. Full details from the editor. Thanks again Bob.

Half-Term Review

Half-way through the season and time to undertake a Section-by-Section, team-by-team, review of performance to date.

The end of June signals the half-way point in our League season and as is our tradition we conduct a full review of each team's performance to date and make some suggestions as to the outcome in each of our seven sections. Neck on the line time again!

10-MAN LEAGUE SECTION 1

Lockwood Con A continue their domination of the 10-Man League top section this season in their quest to complete a record-equalling fifth consecutive title. A sixteen-point lead, only two defeats all season both by the minimum 4-5 scoreline and faltering challenges by their prime opponents, what could go wrong? It would be a brave man or a fool who would bet against them reaching that milestone this year and it appears that they have successfully avoided repeating the catch-up situation they found themselves in last and if they were to repeat their second-half of the season set of results of last year then the sixteen point lead will only increase.

Elland C&BC A have surprised all by their form and results this season and second place at the half-way stage is a big step up from their sixth-place finish of 2017. A seven point advantage over the third placed team hides the fact that they have lost more games than their main competitor for the runner-up spot which may not be enough if the manner of their defeats is to be believed and the fact that two of those defeats, away at bottom-of-the-table **Thongsbridge A** and 1-8 at home to **Milnsbridge A**, show their vulnerability. It would be churlish to dwell on the negatives when there are so many positives to take in, such as the number of big wins - three by 8-1 and one by 9-0 - that shows their potential. They are enjoying an excellent season and only their inability to field any team on days other than a Tuesday is surely holding them back from making their mark in any of our Knock-Out competitions based on their form this season.

Third-placed **Cowcliffe** have built on their rampaging finish to the 2017 season when, after only one win in their first ten matches, they finished with seven wins in their last ten to avoid what had appeared this time last year to be an inevitable relegation. They have never looked back from then and even moved on to a new level this year which has seen them defeat both the teams above them, albeit both at home, this season. It is very close behind the leading pair as just one point separates **Cowcliffe** from **Milnsbridge A** and **Almondbury BC A**.

Milnsbridge A forecast their own failings this season which have proven accurate as some inconsistency has seen them relinquish second place that was

almost a first place last season. A 7-6 win record is well below their potential as shown in the latest match result of their season when they won 8-1 away at second-placed **Elland C&BC A**, a truly unexpected result and it remains to be seen whether that acts as a pivotal moment in their season and triggers a return to their top form and another run for, what can only be surely, second place. **Almondbury BC A** have been a great surprise this season and although they currently sit fifth they are only one point off third place which would represent a massive turnaround in fortunes considering they only escaped relegation in the final two weeks of last season. Eight wins from thirteen games with the only two heavy defeats (1-8 and 0-9) being to the top two teams sees them well positioned to mount an unexpected challenge for league honours although their best hopes may rest in a KO success as they retain an interest in both the Bistro and Team KO as they enter the latter stages.

The two promoted teams continue to hold on to the two relegation places and for **Thongsbridge A**, at least, the omens do not look good. Their one win in thirteen coming back in mid-April albeit against second in the table **Elland C&BC A** since then they have collected just nineteen points from ten matches, true relegation form. **Brockholes A** can take some heart from their recent 7-2 away win against the bottom team and have in fact won three of their last five matches to push them just two points off safety. It is a major surprise to see **Clayton West** well and truly in the relegation mix and their highly dependent home form of previous years has just disintegrated this time around. With their traditional suspect away form continuing only the bottom team has won less games than them but surely there is too much talent for them to continue in this manner much longer.

The A teams from **Meltham**, **Golcar Lib** and **Netherton Con** should all recognise that they are very much in danger of becoming entrapped in the relegation fight with ten points separating five teams trying to avoid the second relegation spot. To think that they are too good to go down would class them as being in denial and oblivious to the real danger of their plight. **Meltham** in particular are having a new experience at the wrong end of the table following a fourth place finish last year so this is not something they are used to as they have never finished outside the top five in the last four years. The **Netherton** and **Golcar** teams both flirted with relegation last year but recovered their form sufficient to move away in good time but a second such repeat may not have a happy ending this time.

Marsh Utd A and **Lindley Lib A** both have a 6-0 home win records as the cornerstone to their mid-table security whilst **Waterloo** have won as many games as second placed **Elland C&BC A** to suggest that they too will be safe this season once again and could possibly go even higher as they complete the first half of the season on a high of five straight wins.

SECTION 2

Until a few days ago it looked like we would be reporting on an unbeaten first half of the season for Section 2 leaders **Rastrick** but they were surprisingly beaten at the unlikely venue of Primrose Hill Lib. That shouldn't disguise the fact that they are a very strong team at this level and have made a good recovery from their Section 1 relegation of last year. Eleven straight wins, the League's last unbeaten record, the Section's top three singles bowlers, all this contributed to a fantastic home record of four 8-1 wins and two 9-0's. Add to that averaging over six points per match away from home contributed to their fifteen point lead which surely means promotion is almost assured especially as Longwood, their main rival, still have to visit them.

Longwood have justified their placing in Section 2 after joining the 10-Man League this season but seem to have a fight on their hands now for the second promotion place and it is developing in to a three way tussle for the second promotion place and it would be foolish to rule out Longwood having a big say in the eventual outcome. Their opening run of eight straight wins before a home defeat at the hands of Rastrick followed by a surprise 3-6 reversal at Hemplow has allowed **Crosland Moor** to move right into their rear view mirror and set the alarm bells ringing. Crosland Moor seem to have finally got over the last day of last season disaster when they missed out on promotion by two points after losing three of their final five fixtures. That hangover lasted for the opening two games which they lost and subsequently went on to win nine of their next ten games only losing to the leaders albeit 0-9.

New Mill A have positively flourished on the back of the Section 3 title they won last season and have settled very quickly at this higher level to sit comfortably in fourth position. Probably asking too much of them to kick-on to join in the promotion battle just yet but they have consolidated their new status really quickly and could expect to build on that next year maybe.

Lindley BC A, Hemplow, Kirkheaton C&BC A and **Skel Windmill A** hold down slots six to nine. Last season they finished grouped together again in places four to seven and appear to be joined at the hip and move en-block. They all seem destined for a further season of mid-table consistency, winning when expected but losing the games against the big boys. Maybe that is a tad unfair but until they start taking points off the top teams they are likely to remain in mid-table limbo. The only wins any of this gang of four has taken from the top teams in sixteen attempts is Skel Windmill's 5-4 home win over a hungover Crosland Moor in early April and Hemplow's recent success over Longwood. Such results need to become more frequent if any of these teams are to push themselves into the promotion race this year.

However note should be taken of **Broad Oak A's** progress this year as they have leap-frogged the four mid-tables to assume fifth place based on an exemplary 6-0 home win record. With the top three teams all still to visit them they do have a real chance of having a say in the eventual destiny of the promotion places even if they may not be sat in them when the season's roundabout finally grinds to a halt. A ninth place finish in 2017 has given way to significant progress this year and obviously a team to watch out for especially on their own turf.

Meltham B are on the fringe of the relegation dog-fight that is developing but are now in the sights of **Almondbury Lib** who will be keen to preserve their hard fought Section 2 status on the back of promotion last year. Almondbury Lib started the season with two straight wins but then have only recorded one more in the ten fixtures since. Meltham B have already beaten the three teams below them and will probably have to do the same again in the second half if they are to retain their current status coupled with gaining a few odd points here and there as well. That shouldn't be beyond them but if they don't beat their nearest rivals then concern will inevitably mount.

What to make of **Primrose Hill Lib A**? The first team this season to beat Rastrick but that was only their third win of the season and they look uncomfortable in a relegation position and just one point off of bottom place. If that Rastrick result is the sign of better form then they are more than capable of moving clear of the drop zone but a current record of only gaining nine points from six away games and without an away win at all shows the area that must be addressed if they are to move away from the very real threat of relegation.

No team has won less games than **Shepley** and they duly sit at the foot of the table although only five points off safety. They finished the half-season checkpoint with a home win against Almondbury Lib to claw their opponents back in to the relegation battle. They will certainly need a lot more results like that to ease their predicament and deny me the start-of-season forecast as my tip to go down.

SECTION 3

Thorpe Green were mortified after being relegated last season as part of the league reorganisation and it would have been easy for them to sulk away their chances of addressing that perceived injustice. They have done the opposite by attacking from the outset and starting with six straight wins which has allowed them to have an eleven point lead at the half-way stage. Two defeats in their last four games has brought them back to earth but that may be more to do with key player holidays rather than any long-term drop in standards. With no clear contender emerging to challenge them it is easy to tip them to continue their season with the anticipated award of the title come September.

One point separates the next three teams although a concentrated effort to remove the leaders from anyone of them hasn't emerged to date. **Lindley**

Lib B are currently in pole position to mount a challenge based on a sound home record which has only been punctured by the leaders. It seems that it is a sound all-round team performance, rather than having any superstars, which is the secret of their success as they don't have a bowler in the top ten averages. New boys **Lockwood Con B** have fully justified their placing in this section by featuring in the promotion tussle primarily a result of their home form which sees them taking more home points than any other team in the section but without an away win to date. This shows their Achilles heal and their record may be slanted at present with six of their ten games being played at home. So six away matches for them in the second half of the season and one of them is at the leaders so substantial improvement in their away day performances are required if they are to justify the favourites tag placed on them by the Fantasy League entrants.

Me and my boys at **Kirkheaton Con** are still coming to terms with last season's relegation inflicted on us as part of the league reorganisation and only now starting to show why we consider ourselves still to be a Section 2 team. With more home games than away matches to come on a green that visiting teams traditional don't welcome visiting then we have reason to be optimistic about the rest of the season. Ironically an impressive away record to date which is only bettered by the leaders. Just off this three-team grouping but well in contention for the second promotion place are **Golcar Lib B**. Last year's Section 4 Champions as well as lifting the Sub-Team KO title and they have continued in that vein this year to figure prominently at the top end of the table to date. June hasn't been a good month for them however although their 6-3 home win over Lockwood Con B was important but came prior to the loss of important team members through holiday commitments which contributed to two recent defeats one by 0-9 at the hands of big rivals Kirkheaton Cons.

Holmfirth A, **Paddock I&C** and **Springwood** finished the 2017 season in fourth, fifth and sixth positions with just six points between them. This year they currently sit grouped together again (but in a different order) in sixth, seventh and eighth positions with five points between them. Yet with just two away wins all season between them the key to any upward surge appears dependent on this area being addressed. There is just two points between the bottom three teams and all have identical Won 3 Lost 7 playing records this season and all three were in different sections from each other last year. **Canalside** are currently bottom as they were in Section 2 at the end of last season whereas **Almondbury BC B** came up from Section 4 after a clear second place finish. **Ravensknowle Park A** had a Section 3 mid-table finish last year so very different backgrounds for the three most in fear of losing their Section 3 status. Difficult to separate this trio but worth noting that they only have one away win between them making them most dependent on home wins to save their current

status. That being the case **Canalside** have an advantage as they have more home games left this year but it will inevitably be very tight. My pre-season tip for the drop for **Canalside** is looking sound but it is so close that a couple of good results for any of the three could trigger a recovery to determine the outcome.

SECTION 4

It has been an interesting first half of the season in Section 4 with a very open competition for honours and six of the twelve teams still harbouring realistic promotion hopes this year. With only thirteen points between top and sixth place there is every right for all of them to consider themselves in the mix for end of season honours. After a number of weeks of a rotating top spot resident it seems that **Bradley & Colne** are starting to emerge as title favourites but so close are things that may just be an illusion to be shattered by any run of wins from any of these contenders. Three of the top six have unbeaten home records and **Bradley & Colne** have that plus the best away points count as well to show a six point lead at present. Their pre-season recruitment has paid dividends so far but there is still much to be done before they can lay claim to any real success this season and I am sure that they appreciate that. **Brockholes B** have taken it in turn to head the table but two defeats in their last three games has been a setback for them and they need to return to the form that saw them collect three 8-1 wins already this season. They were the highest placed team of five relegated from Section 3 last year as part of the league reorganisation and are showing real determination to return to that level at the first time of asking. That determination will be well tested in the first match of the second half of the season when they host the leaders who will be keen to maintain that gap at its current level of six points.

Marsden Park sit in third place which is exactly where they finished the 2017 season and again have an impressive home record. Last year they won ten of their eleven home matches and they are on course to do that again this time around but that may still not be enough for them to improve on last year and may have to settle for the position of 'bridesmaid' once again if they are not careful. Promoted **Outlane** have had a great start to their 2018 campaign and are unbeaten on their 'new' green and only the leaders have won more games than them to date. It is asking a lot of them to continue that form for the rest of the season but who is to say that they are not up to it. They remain a threat to all the top teams.

Slaithwaite and **Marsh Utd B**, locked together on the same number of points, are the other two teams with promotion aspirations this year. However three consecutive 3-6 defeats (two of them at home) in June against other top six teams has damaged the chances of **Slaithwaite** improving their position and may be an indication of the level they are currently capable of operating at - just off the top level. The weakness in **Marsh Utd B's** push for

promotion is their away form which has resulted in five straight defeats, the worst record in Section 4. Their current fifth place is one better than they ended last season and continues to build on their consolidation at this level after promotion two years ago.

Of the rest there is only ten points between the six clubs in the bottom half so all must be considered potential relegation candidates even if they don't accept that themselves. **Lindley BC B** started the season brightly enough with home and away wins but that was quickly followed by seven consecutive defeats which sees them at the foot of the table but not without hope of improvement especially as they have already played more away matches than at home harbouring hopes of a stronger run in. **Meltham C** have both inflicted and been on the end of 9-0 scorelines already this season so obviously some potential there to raise hopes of further improvement and again they have more home matches than away games during the rest of the season.

Six straight defeats opened the **Netherton Con B** season but then two 8-1 wins plus another away win revived their season allowing them to move up from the relegation places but still within catching distance and more points needed to ensure they retain Section 4 status for next season. **Denby Dale** will be happy to hang on in there after promotion last season but may have to find another gear to ensure that happens although five wins from eleven games to date is not really relegation form which will undoubtedly hearten **Broad Oak B** and **Milnsbridge B** who both have identical Win/Lose records. A real divide in this section with the top six teams all interested in promotion and the bottom six concerned about avoiding relegation so an ongoing interest for every team.

SECTION 5

Leaders **Lowerhouses** are currently on a run of five consecutive wins which has contributed considerably to their nine point lead which has recently emerged over **Thongsbridge B** who in turn have a four point lead over **Elland C&BC B** whose six game unbeaten run ended last week at Lowerhouses. It looks increasingly likely that the two promotion places will be decided between these three hopefuls. **New Mill B** would have counted themselves amongst that elite group at one stage but four defeats from their last five fixtures has put a stop, at present, to such thoughts. The **Rugby Club** are in that mid-table clutter as well and despite the fact that they have already beaten both of the top two teams they don't really threaten to launch a promotion campaign having lost to three teams below them and having already played seven of their eleven fixtures at home. Only the leaders have damaged the home record of **David Brown Sports** but they haven't won an away game since the first day of the season and until they show more capabilities on the road are unlikely to bridge that gap to the leading trio. **Holmfirth B** have steadied the ship after losing their opening three matches

and are currently enjoying a three match unbeaten run which could get extended and create hopes of further advancement. **Greenhead Park** may be in a false position of eighth, as problems with their green, has led to them playing seven of their first eleven fixtures away from home and they have won their four home games.

There are only eight points between the bottom four teams and none of their records look terminal although they remain the most likely candidates for the bottom spot come the end of September. However there is reason to be hopeful for all four of them as there has been signs of good form and potential shown by each offering hope of better things to come and the closeness of the points means that it will not take too much for any one, or more, of them to raise themselves above the waterline. **Dalton** have had three 8-1 wins but they have also lost by the same scoreline three times as well. **Kirkheaton C&BC B** lost five of their first six games but have recovered since then with improved results including a unique 8-0 scoreline (both teams were short of a full ten) last week. The bottom two, **Primrose Hill Lib B** and **Ravensknowle Park B**, are there for a reason and there is little comfort in their results to date to indicate that they are capable of steaming up the league. However despite their indifferent first half of the season neither are too far off the pace to consider themselves nailed on for bottom place. Lots of the season still to go and like every one of our 83 teams they will be doing their best to improve results over the next 26 weeks.

6-MAN LEAGUE SECTION A

The mist is beginning to clear and a new running order is developing in the 6-Man League as several teams have tried stepping up to the mark to assume the dominant position of recent years assumed by Longwood and Lockwood Cons. This new post-Longwood/Lockwood era has been interesting as a number of teams seemed likely, at one point, to come to the top and take on the challenge but the final outcome still remains open.

Two teams have opened up a slight gap over the main pack but whether that remains sustainable or not is still to be determined. **Netherton Con** have a three point lead that hardly seems sufficient to support them to their second Section A title success and the lifting of the McEwan Younger Shield this year. More wins will be required especially as they have to play their main two rivals both away from home before the season ends. A 2-5 home defeat by their nearest rival is an ominous sign and will give heart to the chasers as they once again in turn try to push on and lay claim to honours. Yet the results to date for the leaders has been impressive with just one defeat on the road, a five match winning run leading up to the half-way point and a first 7-0 winning scoreline in their latest game and this against third-placed Farnley Tyas. That away record

being the difference as the top four teams all have a Won 5 Lost 1 home record. A three-point lead seems fragile with **Crosland Moor** in pursuit and the knowledge that they have already beaten the leaders on their own green. That gap would be much less but for them losing to two bottom half teams (Shepley and Milnsbridge) on consecutive Mondays and then going down 1-6 at Farnley Tyas which has cost them topspot. The absence of a 7-0 scoreline to date also counts against them as teams are scrambling for the slightest of advantages.

The chasing pack of three teams, Farnley Tyas, Thongsbridge B and Clayton West will consider themselves to be in with a shout of the final outcome and all have good reason to think that. **Farnley Tyas** have had their turn at the top but have picked up only eleven points from five away games to undermine their challenge. Very strong at home including a 6-1 win over Crosland Moor and with Netherton Con still to visit them they will feel that their challenge hasn't ended yet. A recent 7-0 home win over **Thongsbridge B** sees Farnley one point above their rivals who have lost all their games against the teams in the top five. The reverse fixtures to come will see three of those top five teams having to visit them and wins will be imperative if hopes are to be raised of further success.

Only the top two have won more games than **Clayton West** but their problem is that they don't win big enough. Just one 6-1 victory all season has undermined their challenge despite a good 3-3 away record. Starting the season with five straight 2-5 defeats put paid to any hopes of better days for **Milnsbridge** but then a subsequent run of five wins from their next six matches pushed them into a comfortable mid-table position. Maintaining that form should see them raise even further but that start will go against them come the final count-up. **Paddock**, as always, are proving difficult to beat on their own two-tier green and the two leaders will not be relishing their visits there in the second half of the season.

Only eight points separate the bottom five teams from which the relegation places will be determined no doubt. The current occupants, **Golcar Lib** and **Almondbury Lib**, are there because they are the only two teams without an away win all season so something has to change if they are to retain their top section status. **Shepley** have one away win to date but surprisingly that was at high-flying Crosland Moor to show their potential that has been otherwise hidden. Four 1-6 defeats from their first five fixtures is the reason that **Skel Windmill A** are in that relegation fight although four wins from their next six games points to better days ahead and they are a team on the up and will surely be safe. The same could be said of **Brockholes A** with three 6-1 wins from their latest four matches indicates that they have turned the corner so leaving three teams to finalise relegation matters between themselves.

SECTION B

Three prime candidates for the two promotion places with **Lindley Lib** the stand-out favourite for the title. In fact they could have had a much bigger lead than the two points that currently separates them from Primrose Hill Lib as they have only suffered one defeat to date, surprisingly that was at the home of mid-table Meltham. With home games to come with both their nearest challengers it increasingly looks like Lindley Lib will be lifting the Section B title once again having previously claimed it in 2014.

However Primrose Hill Lib and Oakfield T&BC may still have other ideas about the destiny of the first title of the post-Longwood/Lockwood Con era. That would be a first for either team as neither have enjoyed any league success to date. **Primrose Hill Lib** have played both their closest rivals at home already beating Oakfield 6-1 and only losing on the aggregate scoring 3-4 to Lindley Lib so repeats of those outcomes would surely push the title race all the way to the final week. In contrast third-placed **Oakfield** have lost both encounters with their closest rivals and really cannot repeat those results if they expect to remain in the title race.

Skel Windmill B are having a satisfactory first season in the 6-Man League although three defeats in their last five games has soured that somewhat and hindered higher aspirations. However the top three teams have all to visit them so presenting them with every opportunity to put themselves back in the promotion picture. **Golcar C&BC** are another new team enjoying their first season in the league and if they could manage a first away win of the campaign it would improve their standing considerably. Away wins are something of a rarity in this section as seven of the eleven teams still await their first success on the road this season.

Meltham have shown their potential by being the only team to beat the leaders but that was an exception as they have lost every other game to teams higher in the table than them. **Hemplot** are the lowest placed team with a 100% home record and with the top two both due in this bowling western outpost things could become interesting. **Holmfirth's** eighth position has only been gained on the back of six home games and there may be concerns that an imbalance of home games in the second half could see them struggling to raise any higher. **Brockholes B** have improved on last year's bottom place despite an opening run of four straight losses. **Marsh Lib** are a team of novice bowlers enjoying their first season in the league and the more they play the better they get and will look forward to further improvement over the second half of the season. **Thongsbridge A** started with a run of five defeats before gaining a couple of creditable home wins. More of the latter will be required if they are to move up and away from the final place.