

Women's British League

The 20th season of the Women's British League commenced this weekend in Hinckley, Leicestershire. The event consisting of teams of the top women from all over the country met for the first of the two weekends to decide the championships of all divisions.

Byng Hall women's team, consisting of the team captain and club coach Jurate Brazaityte, Jasmin Ould who is the current Kent Cadet and Junior Champion, Gosia Muda and Evelina Danileviciute, had to start from scratch this year, as due to circumstances beyond the club's control, it was unable to field a team last season. This meant that the current team had to start in Division 4, and as this year's new teams consisted of some very highly ranked players, this was going to be quite a test for the Byng Hall ladies.

The first match of the day on Saturday was Barrow, on paper one of the two weakest teams Byng Hall was to face this weekend. A good start here was vital if Byng Hall were to stand any chance of promotion this year. And a good start is what they got. Jurate was first up against Anna Donohue, Barrows number two. The first match was a shaky affair but none the less a stout team captain's performance won her the match 3-2, giving Byng Hall a 1-0 lead. This was followed by Jasmin's win against Barrow's number one player, Emily Standing, to take the match score 2-0 to Byng Hall. Evelina was next up and she made short work of Annie Hudson putting the club in the driving seat, needing only one of the final 3 matches to bring home a team win. Jurate was on again against Barrow's number one, and she made short work of this match, having now warmed up, winning the match in 3 straight games to give the Byng Hall girls their first team win. Although Evelina lost to the number 2, Jas beat Anne Hudson in the final match, making the final score 5-1 and giving Byng Hall two valuable points.

The second match of the day was against Halton TTC 2, potentially one of the stronger sides, but for this match Byng Hall now had their number two woman, Gosia Muda, available to play having been delayed by the trains for the first match. All went well to start with as Gosia beat Karen Tonge 3-0. Jurate had then to play the very fast youngster Angharad Phillips of Wales. Jurate put up a valiant fight but went down 3-1. Jasmin then lost 3-1 to the awkward combination bat player Helena Dennett. Things were not looking good at this stage, but Jurate again put in the captain's performance to beat Tonge, evening the match score at 2-2. Muda had no such problems with Dennett, giving Byng the 3-2 lead, but Angharad then took the final match score for Halton by beating Ould, leaving Byng to settle for a draw.

The final match of Day 1 was against De Vere Netts. This was going to be tough, on paper at least! First up was the very strong Kelly Skeggs for Netts against Byng Hall's Gosia Muda. Here Skeggs showed her strength by taking Muda out 3-1. Then it was Brazaityte's turn to get revenge on a previous county match loss against Nikki Kennard, the Netts' number two. Jurate made short work of this match, annihilating Kennard 11-4, 11-3, 11-2. Justice was served!! Jasmin then beat Holly Stubbings 3-0, giving the Byng Hall ladies a surprising lead at this early stage. It was then Jurate's turn to play an old rival Skeggs who she hadn't beaten for some time. But inspired by the team performance so far and her destruction of Kennard, Jurate put the team ahead with a convincing 3-1 win over Skeggs. Muda then beat Stubbings, and Ould lost to Kennard, giving Byng the 4-2 win over De Vere Netts.

So into day two, Byng Hall ladies are in the second slot overall with 5 out of a possible 6 points.

An early start on the Sunday against Ormesby 2, a strong and awkward team. Jurate played first, convincingly beating the highly ranked junior Jessica Dawson 3-1, using her clever spin variation of serve to good effect. This was followed by Gosia Muda of Byng losing to their number one Jane Durham by the same score. Jasmin lost to Katherine Le Fevre 3-0, so it was now an up hill struggle for the Byng Hall ladies. The captain Jurate had to come to the rescue again with a great performance against a very experienced Durham to level the match score 2-2. Jasmin now had Dawson to contend with, and although she gave a superb display of table tennis, Dawson proved to be just too strong on the day, and Jas went down fighting 3-1. Muda beat Le Fevre 3-1 in the final game, to level off the final match score at 3-3 and gaining Byng Hall a valuable point against one of the stronger teams.

The final match of the weekend was against the weakest side of the division, and this proved to be the case as the Byng Hall girls trounced Okehampton Girls 6-0, only dropping one leg a piece against their number one to secure victory.

Byng Hall ended the first weekend in the second place overall with the division leaders, Oldham, only holding a slender one point cushion. Byng Hall is yet to play this team at the second weekend of the Women's British League to be held at the University of West England in Bristol on 24/25 January 2009, where the team will have to fight hard if they are to overtake the current leaders for promotion next season.

To top up the successful team performance, Jurate Brazaityte is leading the player averages with 90% record (9 wins out of 10 matches played), alongside Nikki Kennard of De Vere Netts and Kim Barnard of Oldham. Gosia Muda ended the weekend with 75% record (played 8 won 6), whilst Jasmin Ould and Evelina Danileviciute had to settle for 50% record.

Byng Hall has room for new members of any age or nationality. For more information, please visit www.bynghall.net and/or contact the Club Chairman, Gary Howes, on 07768 742 414 or gary.howes@bynghall.net.