

Belfast and District League 2015-16

It's fair to say that the Belfast and District League has gone from strength to strength this season, with 18 teams – the most in nearly twenty years – battling it out in three highly competitive divisions and producing some exciting and unpredictable chess.

Firstly, a reminder of the basic rules:

Matches are contested over five boards

Time control is G/90

Teams earn a combination of match points and game points; for example, a team drawing 2.5-2.5 would gain 3.5 points (2.5 game points plus 1 match point) and a team winning 5-0 would gain 7 points (5 game points plus 2 match points)

The above rules apply in all three divisions

Division 1 (Silver King)

After eight rounds (out of 15) Muldoons 1 lead by a point from the CS Lewis Lions. So far, this season has been remarkable for three reasons in particular; the unexpected success of QUB 1 (expected to battle with Bangor Groomsport over the relegation spot, but currently in third place and only three points off the lead after a string of excellent results including wins over both leading sides) the disastrous start of champions Ballynafeigh 1 (runaway winners last season, but with losses to Bangor Groomsport (1.5-3.5), The A Team (1-4) and the CS Lewis Lions (2-3) in the first three weeks they are in fifth place) the extreme closeness of the division (despite being in fifth place out of six with more than half the season gone, Ballynafeigh 1's bid to retain the title is still very much alive as they are just 7.5 points behind)

Upsets of the season so far:

Match: QUB 1 (average rating 1542) defeat Muldoons 1 (average rating 1795) 3-2 (Week 8)

Individual: Milad Foozoni (QUB 1, 1419) defeats Danny Mallaghan (Muldoons 1, 1783) (Week 8)

Gary Johnston (Bangor Groomsport, 1212) draws with Stephen Wood (Muldoons 1, 1722) (Week 2)

Michael Sheerin (Bangor Groomsport, unrated) defeats Chris Black (Ballynafeigh 1, 1528) (Week 6)

Division 2 (John Strawbridge Cup)

Last season, Kelly's Heroes claimed the Strawbridge Cup with Ballynafeigh 3 coming in second. Kelly's Heroes declined to take their spot in Division 1, opting instead to attempt a defence of the Cup, while Ballynafeigh, with a number of players leaving, opted to streamline their setup from five teams to four, with only

one of them playing in the top division. The main contenders in this division were therefore expected to be Kelly's Heroes and Ballynafeigh 2, and that's how it has turned out so far, with the latter team leading by five points.

The most recent meeting between the two sides, in week 8, had more than just league position on the line; a few days before the match, a comment was posted on the Ballynafeigh web site claiming that Kelly's Heroes would win the match – and the league – comfortably. This served only to motivate Ballynafeigh 2, however, as they ran out 3.5-1.5 winners.

In third place are Fruithill, 14 points off the lead with a match in hand, while Muldoons 2 in fourth, the CS Lewis Witches in fifth and NI Civil Service in sixth are battling to avoid relegation; they are separated by just one point, while Civil Service have a match in hand.

Upsets of the season so far:

Match: NI Civil Service (average rating 1220) defeat the CS Lewis Witches (average rating 1323) 3.5-1.5 (Week 6)

Individual: Paddy Magee (Muldoons 2, 1150) defeats William Storey (Kelly's Heroes, 1366) (Week 6)

Geoff Hindley (NI Civil Service, 1042) draws with Chris Black (Ballynafeigh 2, 1528) (Week 4)

Division 3

This season sees the welcome return of a third division. Bangor have added two teams (Andrew's Army and the Bangor Wannabees, both comprised mainly of players from the after-school chess club that Andrew Todd has done an excellent job of organising at Bangor Grammar School) as have QUB. Together with Ballynafeigh's third and fourth teams, they make up Division 3. QUB 2 lead by three points from Andrew's Army, with the Ballynafeigh teams in third and fourth, the Bangor Wannabees in fifth and QUB 3 bringing up the rear.

Upsets of the season so far:

Match: Ballynafeigh 3 (average rating 944) defeat Ballynafeigh 4 (average rating 978) 3-2 (Week 1)

Bangor Wannabees (all unrated) defeat QUB 3 (average rating 959) 3-2 (Week 5)

Individual: Derek Truesdale (Ballynafeigh 3, 1011) defeats Bernard McCaughey (QUB 2, 1425) (Week 5)

Dmitry Zelenchuk (Ballynafeigh 4, unrated) defeats Adam Henning (QUB 2, 1233) (Week 2)

Matthew Grey (Bangor Wannabees, unrated) defeats Adam Henning (QUB 2, 1233) (Week 8)

Full league tables, along with reports on each week's play, can be seen at
HYPERLINK "<http://www.ulsterchess.org/>"<http://www.ulsterchess.org/>.

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