

LEICESTERSHIRE TABLE TENNIS <https://www.topspin-ldttl.co.uk/>

This year is the 60th anniversary of the Gradings being introduced to the Leicester League. At the time the English Table Tennis Association were interested enough to have started procedures to incorporate them into every league but an aggressive take over stopped it in its tracks. Leicester and several other clubs did adopt the system which is still going strong.

It was based loosely on the chess system in the country at the time with an adaption I applied to allow for three opponents at a time instead of the one-to-one of chess, but it still worked on assessing players on the status and ability of their opponents. Better opponents means better Gradings.

The overall system gave five Master levels beginning with the almost impossible 400 barrier for International Master. Then 350: National Master, 300: County Master, 250: League Master and 200: Club Master. Normally in local leagues just a handful of players would be above 300.

In the Leicester League the core average has been allowed to slip so that the bulk of players are around 28 below what they would be using the initial system. I have calculated players on the old system and, largely because they had five players in their championship winning team, Unicorn have five of the nine above 300. Final Gradings (top 12) for 2023/24:

County Master: 325: Chris Rogers (KP), 315: David Arrowsmith, 311: Adam Pettitt, 306: William Michell (all Unicorn), 306: Garry Knights (Lough Uni). 305: Robin Pearce (both Lough Uni), 304: James Berry (KP), 301: Xingling Luo, 300: Sandor Koch (both Unicorn).

League Master: 295: Ayush Buche (Uni II), 292: Mat Hobday (Elec), 290: Wing Tat Victory Tam (KP II).

As a comparison top in other divisions are, Division Two: James Lancaster (KP VI) and Martin Brunning (Holwell) were so close at the top on, respectively 247 and 246. Mitch Davison (KPVIII) was 100% in Division Three on 225, while Martin Bolton in Division Four and also unbeaten finished at 201. In Division Five Chris Wilson (Nomads II) finished on 147.

Notice has gone out to clubs for entries for the League's summer competition for the Elbow Tankard, a team handicap that was inaugurated just over 50 years ago largely because of the instigation of the gradings making things much easier to handicap players.

Entries soon built up to 32 teams to allow four divisions of eight with the four winners, after a summer-long event, going through to the semi finals.

The first winners were a team called Strollers representing the Northwood club and one of the successful players, Geoff Hancock, is still playing in the league for Abbots Road in Division Two. Abbots Road usually put a team in so it would be good to see Geoff straddling those 50-plus years.

John Bowness.