

TABLE TENNIS GROUP

Report by Peter Singer

On Saturday 19 February, four of our group travelled to Middlesbrough to watch Ormesby Table Tennis Club take on Fusion Table Tennis in a British League Premier Division match. We arrived in good time to eat our packed lunches before the match started at 2pm (spectating can be an exhausting business, so we needed sustenance) and to see some of the players warming up, which was itself quite a spectacle.

Once play commenced, the games came thick and fast. Since 2001, competitive matches have been played under the 11-up scoring system, so that service changes after every two points and the winner is the first to reach eleven points, with a two-point margin. If the score reaches 10-10, service changes after every point and the winner is the first one to gain a lead of two points (one of the games in the closely-contested doubles match went to 17-19). This system was introduced to make the game faster and more exciting and it certainly does that.

Serves tend to be fairly slow, but with a lot of spin and some fairly convoluted postures being adopted by the server to try to disguise the spin and direction of the ball, often accompanied by a stamp of the right foot – older members don't try this at home, especially if you have a dodgy back! Very quickly, however, the pace of the exchanges increases until both players may be standing several feet away from the table swapping smashes for all they are worth. Exhilarating stuff!