

First training session since lockdown by Simon Aldis

Apprehensive as I found shorts and court shoes, that had not been worn for months and re acquainted myself with my bat.

Slightly surprised to find that me and my partner, we're the only takers for the late evening session on the first Monday available since lockdown, but nevertheless we began to play.

Initial rallies were short, timing lacking, balls skewing off the end of the table. But gradually it came back. There was the unmistakable satisfaction of nailing a forehand, the delicious ping when a chop slides over the net at exactly the right height and angle to land deep to the backhand. My partners fading forehand to my backhand was unerringly accurate despite the lay off! I relished letting loose with smashes, and the two of us noted a gradual improvement in the quality of our rallies.

30 minutes of knocking up and then, into some games, after two close contests we paused, red faced, breathless, had the temperature gone up in the room? We pushed on, I can reveal the final score was 9/1 to my opponent, but I cared not, the important thing was to be back, remembering how to construct points, thinking about what serve to test my opponent with, executing shots, all that which is axiomatic to our game; which I'd worried I might not have lost, but may have incrementally diminished during the long period of absence, compared to the previous routine of playing two to three times a week, every week.

So, I urge you all book a slot whatever club you play at and get back in the saddle, the more of us who do, the more we can have some sort of competitive table tennis up and running, although at the moment, judged by my first knock, I am playing rather than competing.

Simon's partner was Chris Parmar-Saville and the session at Knighton Park.