**Chair report 2019**

Welcome, for those of you who don’t know me, I’m Jane Gick and I took on the role of chair- person last December. So, although it’s not quite a full year for me in post, it has been an interesting time with lots going on.

From a sports perspective, we have a thriving club that enjoys participating in the many in house competitions we have on offer, as well as competing in various teams around the county. However, we can never be complacent and are always on the look- out for new members to join us in either of the racket sports we have on offer. We encourage posting to any of our media sites as much as possible to reflect wins or loss and the fun we have along the way, in order to encourage others to give it a go.

We are always looking at innovative ideas that encourages new players/members. Some with success, some not so but we strive to encourage new members and welcome them to our friendly club.

So, if we look at squash and racketball first. The pride of our club should go to the junior squash section, it is thriving with thanks to the amazing volunteers that give up their free time to support this. Consequently, we have junior members playing at both county and national level. They are great ambassadors for Newton Abbot squash.

Their calendar reads as such, January Golf and Country club England squash bronze event a great turnout with winners, runners up and high placings. February 5 Juniors represent Devon in the inter counties finals in Nottingham and winning silver medals. May the in- house Bill Moody shield with lots of competitive players. May – 3 teams are entered into the inaugural South West club/Schools’ championships, more than any other club, the A and B side came runners up. The C team was made of players entering competitions for the first time. June Billy Whalley and Darcy Boyle finish the season with strong performances at the Warwick University England squash silver competition finishing 10th and 15th in the country respectively.

September – lots of juniors competing in the Devon county closed with numerous juniors making the podium.

October SW regional closed, Billy Whalley won the u15’s title

November – Billy competed in the British Junior open in Nottingham, finished 21 out of 70 kids.

Men’s squash had a good season with the first team promoted to premiership division, the second team have moved from third division to second and the third team were promoted from the 4th division to the 3rd.

Ladies squash have reduced their team down to one this year, due to lack of women players. The ladies RB section thrives with another year entering two teams. The ladies achieved success in the Devon county cups, winning both the squash and racketball trophies last season.

The 1st women’s racketball team finished mid table with the 2nd team finishing nearer to the bottom.

In addition to the teams we have our NATS team buzzing off – (Newton Abbot touring side) we spent a fabulous weekend in Jersey this year – Jersey dominated the racket ball but our squash ladies shone through, so 2020 we have an even grander trip planned heading off to Valencia, we are spreading our wings to challenge Spanish women.

How do people get to play? On Thursday mornings, from 09;30 a RB session has been running for quite a few years now, numbers fluctuate but it is usually reasonably attended. It is open to non-members. The session is for anyone who wants to give it a go, as well as having several competent players on hand for a bit of a match.

We also have squash and RB ladders to keep your game improving as well as club nights and the Xmas special, this year to be held on 14th December.

A highlight of our squash rackets year and one we should be very proud of, is that of our very successful summer teams. This year 60 participants plus reserves entered the competition over a period between May and September, stopping mid- July for summer holidays and then re convening to complete the competition. This event has improved year on year, with invites to players from Torquay, who also enjoy taking and part and again huge thanks go to the organisers. The local charity chosen this year, was Elize’s let the beat drop, supporting the Papworth NHS foundation trust charity with £420 raised.

Tennis is doing well in their competitions, The ladies A team finished as champions of the Exeter and district league achieving back to back promotions. The B team have retained their place in division 5. The Men’s year has not been so good, their A team were relegated from the third division of the Exeter and district league. The B team finished its season in the South Devon league at mid table. The mixed tennis retained the South Devon league knock out cup and won promotion to division two.

Tennis held their annual Ghana competition. It was their best turnout this year, participants included some from Dawlish, Stover, Ashburton and Victoria park clubs, the weather held out for them, they managed to raise almost £200 which went to the Akuapem hills prep school, which has been used to increase their mini bus purchase fund.

They too have increased their media coverage of matches in order to advertise tennis and the club. They have a solid group of men and women doing their best to promote the club but it goes without saying we are in desperate need to promote a junior section to get the best use of the court availability and boost tennis membership which currently lies at a very low level.

This brings me onto events that you will have heard in part but perhaps not the whole picture, so here it is now, regarding coaching of tennis at Newton Abbott. When I first took over, I was made aware by the LTA, that Newton Abbott were being excluded from the Wimbledon ballot and the tennis leagues having failed to secure a welfare officer and the implications of this role, of which required a person to take charge of all safeguarding responsibilities; to be trained to level three safeguarding and to oversee the role of all coaches at the club. The above was straight forward, a welfare officer was implemented at speed but the sign off cannot go forward. All club coaches were given a year’s grace from 2017 to 2018 to obtain the necessary requirements to remain affiliated with the LTA and all the benefits that provides, our coach did not obtain the certifications and had neither a DBS/CRB or safeguarding at the time of request which in this day and age is unacceptable. We as a committee agreed to extend time for our coach to acquire the relevant certificates, we informed him that without them he could not continue but he has chosen not to gain accreditation and therefore now coaches as an independent. The LTA have said categorically, for the safety of all members, they will only support clubs with coaches accredited to the LTA and as such the welfare officer role for tennis is not complete. This means we can no longer have LTA benefits, which include the Wimbledon ballot and the LTA tennis leagues.

 So, the coach historically has raised concerns to committee on practices that were unsavoury but was given “a chance” however on this issue, we could not accept his stance and indeed we do not need an independent coach. He has been given termination letters of which he is currently in dispute with and we are being challenged by him through solicitors. So, on that matter, this is where it is at. We are trying to negotiate him out, to avoid further court costs. Which in itself is hindering the development of tennis at the club but we are all working as hard as we can to get the matter resolved as soon as possible. Once he has left, my hope is that all club members will come together, to support the rebuilding of the tennis section.

Jane

Chair N.A Squash Racketball & Tennis.