

Southport & District Tennis League

Chairman's Report 2023 Season

2023 followed our, now usual, pattern for league tennis with both a Summer League and an Autumn League (now in its third year). Yet again I am very grateful to our two Match Secretaries, Jeanette Heague (Summer League) and Tim Carey (Autumn League) for their work in managing the leagues and to Christian Bryan for his work setting up the leagues on the League Planner system.

The major change for the league this year was the move to using LTA player registrations within the online system. This is a much more flexible system than we had previously and, in time, should reduce the work involved for clubs and for league officials as lists of players no longer have to be submitted every year. However, particularly for the summer league, there were a lot of issues caused by players not being properly registered with the LTA that gave Jeanette and myself a great deal of work chasing this up, not helped by some faults with the LTA's updating and synchronisation systems. Hopefully this has now settled down and by the time we reached the Autumn League it was much less of an issue.

The Southport & District League is now an LTA "Approved League" and entitled to display a "kite mark" although the LTA do not currently seem able to tell us how we obtain it! It does, however, have the more important benefits of allowing the use of the League Planner software and providing indemnity insurance for the league. A new version of League Planner with some major changes is in the process of being introduced by the LTA although we are not sure, at the time of writing, whether it will be made available to us in 2024. (It is already in use in the South-East of England.)

I would like to thank all those on the League Executive Committee for their work in running the league in 2023. Some of them are mentioned individually in this report but all the committee members have contributed to the smooth running of the league and tournaments and are owed a debt of gratitude for the work they put in on our behalf. In particular I'd like to thank Pauline Pope, our League Secretary whose excellent organisational skills make my job as Chairman so much easier than it could be!

I must also mention our League President John Spurr who has again undertaken the important role of chairing the League Match Regulations Subcommittee that has a vital role in the smooth running of the league.

Thanks are due to Tim Carey for running the team tournaments and to Derek Bardwa for running the individual tournaments. Thanks also to the clubs that hosted the various finals on behalf of the league.

Thanks to Rob Owens for all his work organising the Junior League in 2023 which is so important for the development of our junior players.

I'd also like to thank Sphynx LTC for hosting the 2023 Presentation Evening which was a very enjoyable evening and a chance to celebrate the achievements of our players of all ages. It was, however, disappointing that a number of those who said they would be attending did

not actually turn up on the night which meant some of the food that had been prepared for them was wasted.

One concerning point that was noticed in 2023 was that relatively few players and clubs are entering the various league knock-out competitions. The individual tournaments had only around 50 entrants out of well over 800 potential players in the league and running the individual tournaments cost the league around £569. Similarly, only 33 teams out of a possible 64 entered the main team tournaments and only 24 entered the Spartans while these tournaments cost £633 to run. That ignores the amount of volunteer time spent organising. Unless numbers increase then there may come a point at which we have to decide whether these events are still worth running. Comments from clubs on this would be welcomed.

Lastly, we have vacancies for a League Representative to Tennis Lancashire and several vacancies for the League "general committee". The committee has shrunk a little in recent years and we really need some new volunteers. None of these roles take up a huge amount of time but they are essential for the league to function so please help the League by volunteering just a little of your time. It would be particularly good to have some volunteers from clubs that are not currently represented on the Executive Committee. If your club is not represented then you do not have the opportunity to influence decisions that are made on your behalf!

Rob Hemmings

Chairman, Southport & District Tennis League

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