



## **From the Chairman: November 2018**

Dear All,

Thank you to everyone who attended Bucks Tennis' recent Club Forum. An extremely helpful discussion ensued with excellent feedback on various matters. I now take this opportunity to summarise many of the issues discussed, and outcomes that have resulted from a subsequent meeting of Bucks Tennis' Management Committee.

### **1. Changes to Bucks Shield Rules**

As from Summer 2019 a number of changes will be introduced. These include:

- In an attempt to encourage wider participation the 10-match maximum rule will be withdrawn. Originally the idea behind this rule was to encourage more people to play matches, not to give more tennis to the same players. Instead, the feedback provided at the forum was that the 10-match rule was making it difficult for some clubs to play all their matches, hence the change.
- Where a club has two teams in the same Division players who play for the higher ranked team will not be able to play down, but players who have played for the lower ranked team will be allowed to play up, subject to the normal rule restricting players to only one match for a higher team.
- Where fixtures are arranged for the last two weekends in September and then cannot be played, there will be no points or penalties only if the match is rained off.

A full list of the rule changes will be sent out to fixture secretaries within the next week.

### **2. Date of Fixture Meetings**

At the forum concerns were voiced about the late notice of league compilations for the Winter Seniors (Vets) League Fixture Meeting this Autumn. I am sorry problems arose. In future fixture secretaries will be given more notice of all fixture arrangements. Another concern of many was the fact that some fixture secretaries are not attending the fixture meetings. I take this opportunity to ask all fixture secretaries to attend the two fixture meetings held annually because apart from the organising of fixtures these meetings provide a good opportunity for League Secretaries to offer feedback on specific matters.

The Fixture Meeting for next summer's Bucks Shield will be held at Halton on Monday 4 March 2019.

### **3. Improving our marketing of events and activities**

It was clear from discussion at the forum that Bucks Tennis needs to 'up its game' regarding the marketing of events and activities, including reporting back on results of county team competitions. In particular, our use of social media needs to be improved. A sub-committee will look at new initiatives.

At the same time concerns were raised that information being circulated to clubs is not reaching the relevant personnel. For instance, some club representatives at the forum were unaware of this monthly newsletter that I take several hours preparing each month. It is important that the LTA listing of club contacts is kept up to date so that communications can be channelled to the correct personnel. Also, please feel able to re-circulate the newsletter to whomever you feel would benefit from, or be interested in, reading the same. The newsletter can also be placed on club noticeboards if this is felt worthwhile.

### **4. New registration system**

Bucks Tennis recognises the increased workload clubs have faced in preparing for the new LTA registration that must be completed by the end of November. Thank you to all club committees who have everything in place for registration. All of the 68 clubs we are expecting to be registered have now appointed Welfare Officers (WOs). This is excellent news! As I write this letter 9 of the club WOs still need to attend a safeguarding course and 8 need to complete their DBS checks. Hopefully all will have completed this by the end of November. If any clubs are aware of problems please don't hesitate to make contact with Anthony Heald, Bucks Tennis' administrator (contact details below). Two points:

- The LTA's new regional Safeguarding Officer (Alan Hodges) will be making spot checks of clubs over the coming year to check that all documentation is in place.
- As from October 2019 all coaches working at registered venues must hold an LTA licence.

Bucks Management Committee listens to and reflects on feedback at forums. Hence the benefit of your club being represented at such events. The next forum is scheduled for Monday 11 March 2019.

#### **Other matters:**

##### **A. Changes at the LTA**

At the forum I outlined changes within the LTA that will take place over the next few months. The LTA nationally is concerned about:

- A £7.5million 'black hole' that is presently anticipated for this financial year on top of a £5million loss last year. A £12.5 million loss in two years is unsustainable and results from reductions in commercial income generally and in the surplus from The Championships, Wimbledon, and an increase in expenditure relating to some important new areas of work such as safeguarding.
- A reported year-on-year reduction of 9.7% in national participation within our sport – the reported reduction across the East Region is 6.6%

As a result Scott Lloyd, the LTA's CEO, with the support of the LTA Council, is in the process of restructuring various business activities. This will result in:

- Some redundancies within the LTA's staff.
- The splitting of the East Region from London and the South-East, to return to the former nine-county system with Bucks being in the East Region.
- The everyday activities presently operated through the Tennis Foundation (Education and Disability Tennis mainly) being brought back under the wing of the LTA. [NB. The Tennis Foundation will continue to exist as a charitable arm of the LTA, but the terms of the revised charity are yet to be agreed.]
- The closure of all regional offices, unfortunately, including that at Bucks Indoor Tennis Centre. [NB. The Bucks Tennis office will however continue to function from the Centre.]

A new national strategy is to be launched in January 2019 under a vision strap-line of *'Tennis Opened Up'* with a new mission statement to *'Grow Tennis by making it Relevant, Accessible, Welcoming and Enjoyable'*. Within this seven new strategic leads have been identified: Visibility, Innovation, Investment, Accessibility, Engagement, Performance, and Leadership. Scott is pressing to *"breakdown (or exterminate) fractions that have held our sport back"* and establish *"a line of one across our sport"*, while accepting there has been too much *"chopping and changing"* in strategic planning over the last ten years.

Counties are being asked to cooperate with the proposed changes by endeavouring to improve their own commercial viability, taking on more administrative functions (without additional income via the LTA), looking to promote more competitions and manage Junior Performance programmes, and to establish

county based strategies to help grow participation. It is difficult for Bucks Tennis to extend its present roles without further income and manpower resources – including additional volunteers. Hence I extend a plea made at the forum .... If anyone feels able to assist the further development of tennis in Bucks by joining some of our working groups overseeing, for instance, marketing plans, the raising of finance, the management of Bucks Indoor Tennis Centre, the organisation of tournaments and competitions, to name just four, please contact me.

## **B. Local Player Development Centres**

In a previous newsletter I announced that in Bucks we are delighted that the LTA has recognised two facilities as having the appropriate credibility to be classified as Local Player Development Centres (LPDCs). These are:

- Bucks Indoor Tennis Centre and
- Halton Tennis Centre.

I again believe it is beneficial to clarify the role to be played by these LPDCs. I therefore offer the following:

The LTA has recently established a three-tier national performance pathway - consisting of LPDCs, which are the lowest rung on the national pathway, Regional Player Development Centres and National Academies – leading into a Pro-scholarship and then Elite programmes.

I actually look to the LTA's pathway as being the top three development rungs of a five-step ladder leading into the pro-circuit. Below the LPDCs are county-based performance activities and club development programmes. In Bucks we are extremely fortunate to have a team of coaches, coordinated extremely proficiently by Venetia Cottman, establishing a county based training system that is already being held up as an example of good practice.

We also have a number of clubs that are organising good development programmes that include Bucks Tennis' 'Aspirantes' scheme. Thus, young players should be provided with opportunities to progress into the competitive county-based age group programme, LPDCs and beyond.

The object of LPDCs is to provide selected players aged 10 years and younger with an opportunity to progress into the LTA's performance pathway, but this should not be to the detriment of club or county training activities. These LPDCs should provide local, affordable high-quality training for identified players, and it is vital that all applications to attend the LPDCs be reviewed on an individual basis working closely with the County Team with respect to need and merit, as we are very keen to maintain a strong position of interdependence and integrity with our partner clubs and coaching colleagues throughout the county/area.

The aim of the LPDC Head Coaches will be to endeavour to build a five-way partnership between themselves, the player and his/her parents, the host club coach, the county coach, and LTA representatives. The individual player's welfare and progression must be at the heart of the scheme. It will be important that there is regular liaison with each party. The players can attend one, two, or more sessions at the LPDC (although the training will only be subject to an LTA subsidy if at least two sessions per week are taken at an LPDC), but it is expected that additional training will take place at the host club, and the main source of team match play should be through representation of the club. Additional, occasional, opportunities for team representation will occur at county and LPDC levels. For instance, it is anticipated that from time to time some liaison and match play activities will take place between squads in our two LPDCs.

If anyone requires further information on LPDCs please feel able to contact me.

## **C. Bucks Shield Winners**

While I congratulate all Division winners from the Summer Bucks Shield I particularly highlight the following:

- Ladies Premier 3 pair Champions – Gerrards Cross Bull Lane
- Men's Premier 3 pair Champions – Milton Keynes
- Ladies 2 pair Champions – Stony Stratford
- Men's 2 pair Champions – David Lloyd, Milton Keynes
- Medley 2 pair Champions – David Lloyd Milton Keynes.

All trophies and certificates will be presented at our AGM, see details below. Hopefully all clubs will endeavour to be represented. In recent years it has been disappointing that a number of clubs winning Divisions failed to be represented at the AGM. It provides another opportunity for representatives to share thoughts on tennis-related happenings at national and county levels, so it is an event at which all registered clubs should be represented.

#### **D. County Senior Team results**

I also take this opportunity to congratulate our Senior teams on another successful Summer of competition. In particular, I highlight our Men's over 50s team who are again through to the national final to be played at David Lloyd in Dudley over the weekend 01/02 December. The full set of senior county results are attached to the email.

#### **E. Bucks Tennis' Christmas Dinner**

Our annual Christmas Dinner will be held at Chiltern Forest Golf Club on Wednesday 05 December from 7.30pm. If anyone wishes to attend and hasn't yet received an invitation please feel able to contact Mary Crowshaw via [mcrowshaw@gmail.com](mailto:mcrowshaw@gmail.com)

#### **F. Bucks Tennis' AGM and Presentation Evening**

I hope all clubs have received notification of our Annual General Meeting to be held at Aylesbury College on Monday 26 November. There will be a light buffet supper available from 7.15pm, with a cash bar. The meeting will start at 8pm. I hope all clubs will be represented at this AGM and presentation evening. During the meeting, or out of the meeting on the night, I will be happy to discuss any points that need clarification from this newsletter, or other tennis-related matters.

Our County Ladies and Men's teams will be competing in the Winter County Cup competition over the weekend of Friday 23 to Sunday 25 November. The Ladies are playing in Taunton and the Men are in Hull. I wish both teams success.

Please remember that detailed information on Bucks Tennis' activities is contained on our website at [www.buckstennis.com](http://www.buckstennis.com). Further information on tennis related matters can also be obtained by contacting our Administrator, Anthony Heald via [admin@buckstennis.com](mailto:admin@buckstennis.com) or 01494 462513/07946407334 – or myself.

Kind regards



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