



WALSALL TENNIS CLUB

Newsletter Spring 2011

www.walsalltennis.co.uk



It's March 2011 and spring must just be around the corner. The snowdrops, primulas and daffodils are beginning to bloom and green buds are emerging on the bare branches of the trees. At the Tennis Club twelve members enjoyed their regular two hour session on the courts in the morning sunshine. Tennis is not a seasonal sport anymore, although the Club year starts on 1st April each year.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Ellie Souster will again be happy to receive your membership fees, preferably before the deadline of 31st March, after which a penalty is incurred.

To be included in our Wimbledon Ticket Ballot (Wed 5 April 8pm in the clubhouse) you must have paid your fees for the coming season as well as being British Tennis Membership-registered as at 31 January 2011.

This year, we have an additional option for payment of your club membership fees – direct bank transfer. Details are on the enclosed sheet.

FUNDING

The essential cleaning of the courts last year by Sweepfast meant that the Club coffers had taken a hefty hit and to rectify the situation the Committee took on the challenge of acquiring *Tennis Clubmark* accreditation. After hours of hard labour by Members of the Committee all the documentation was presented to Tennis Staffordshire in October 2010 and we were rewarded with *Clubmark* status. This meant that we were also awarded "Sports Club Standard" by Walsall Council Sports and Leisure Development department. Both achievements will act as a springboard for accessing additional funding sources in the future.

Three weeks ago, with the help of our Club coach, Clayton Edge, we entered into an agreement with Walsall Housing Group (WHG) to provide coaching sessions to selected schools in some of the more deprived areas of Walsall. These early Spring sessions will initially comprise of Clayton visiting the schools, identifying potential tennis talent, and for such individuals to be given every opportunity to pursue an interest in tennis via a series of "free" coaching lessons at the Club. These sessions will be funded entirely by WHG in the form of mini-buses to ferry the children to and from our Club, plus 100% sponsorship for any memberships taken up by the

children. For our part, we will be provided with sufficient funds from WHG to replace the nets on all five of our courts (such cost being in the region of £900).

In addition to this we have also obtained £500 in funding from *Sport Unlimited* for an identical coaching scheme to the one Clayton held at the Club last year which resulted in 24 of the 32 girls targeted becoming Junior members of the Club. This year there is the prospect of widening the scope of the scheme to include Junior boys.

SPONSORSHIP

The Club is pleased to announce that we have two brand new sponsors:

Decathlon - With the recent opening of their new store in Wednesbury, we have forged a very close relationship with this high-profile sports retailer. Not only has the company agreed directly to fund our Club but we also have free advertising at their store in the form of two banners erected within their outside mini-tennis area. Crucially, the Store's management is very amenable to ideas initiated by us on how this mini-tennis area can be utilised as the warmer weather approaches.

Sweepfast - This company has been responsible for the deep-cleaning and maintenance of our courts since late 2009. With the quality of our playing surface being key evidence of the quality of their services, they were a natural choice to be approached in respect of sponsoring two of our windbreaks.

CLUB GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Crucial to any plans for improving the appearance of the Club grounds in the past few weeks has been the need to attack both the leylandii growth on the bottom courts as well as the protruding shrubbery behind the dilapidated PWP windbreaks on the top courts.

Last week, both jobs were undertaken with the result that the sun now seems to rise over the courts about an hour earlier than before! Both our Club sponsors - Decathlon and Sweepfast - have generously donated five brand-new windbreaks bearing their corporate logos to add a distinct touch of class around our grounds. These will be erected within the next weeks in preparation for the new season.

CLUBHOUSE

Outside - Members will note the drain and soakaway which Pete, our groundsman, has worked hard to install at the bottom of the ramp to the clubhouse. It is hoped that this will help alleviate much of the rain "run-off" which flows down the hill from the car park and, until now, has resulted in a muddy mire during the winter months.

Inside - with the additional pipework around the building following the men's shower facilities being completed last Spring, we were always going to be prone to frost problems during the cold weather. Unfortunately, despite lagged pipes and the *in-situ* heater near the stop-cock in the men's changing area, we were inundated with a series of burst pipes and leaks during late December/early January. This has prompted a re-think on how we face these problems in the future and it has been decided to pursue the installation of electrical "heat tracing" cable which is designed to be wrapped around exposed pipework and, with the aid of an automated thermostat, will maintain all our internal pipes at a constant temperature during the winter while switching itself off in the summer.

Tidiness

Unfortunately, maintaining a clean, tidy clubhouse is still an uphill struggle in that, all too often, some users of the clubhouse leave litter everywhere except in the bins provided. For some, there seems to be little concern that someone else has to tidy up their dirty dishes left in the kitchen area. Members are urged to be vigilant in tidying up whenever there is the need and to give the clubhouse an occasional Hoovering.

TEAMS

Our season commences in the first week of March 2011 and our League commitments will see us fielding an unprecedented number of teams. Any member expressing an interest in participating in Match play should speak to the Captains, Chris Smith or Ellie Souster.

For the first time in many years, we have reluctantly decided not to enter any teams in the Walsall League. This decision was reached following a perception that the League was in rapid decline with many other clubs having withdrawn teams last year, and more expected to do so this year. Our Men's E-team will, therefore, compete in Division 7 South of the Wilson Staffordshire Inter Club Tennis League (www.staffstennisleague.co.uk).

Andrew Daffern, our new Men's E-team captain, is eager to hear from any member who wishes to participate in any of the team's 14 matches beginning in early April and ending in late August. His contact details are: Tel. 07703 128947, email: andrew.daffern@bt.com

Meanwhile, our Mixed team will, for the first time, compete in Mixed Division 5 of the Birmingham Metropolitan Summer League (<http://www.mydivision.com/racketindex.php?l=144>) Our Juniors will also be well represented in all age categories for the AEGON Junior League events.

TOURNAMENTS

Sunday 3 April sees the inaugural Walsall Mixed Open Doubles tournament. This new tournament is aimed at attracting some of the top doubles pairings in the county and beyond with prize money of £200 to include Decathlon in-store vouchers.

Sunday 5 June sees us hosting our first Staffordshire LTA County Junior event at the Club. This is an externally organised event aimed, yet again, at raising the profile of our Club and in which we expect to see some very promising youngsters displaying their talent. Please feel free to spectate with your families.

CLUB SOCIAL TENNIS

Both Saturday afternoon and Wednesday evening "Club Sessions" have been in decline in recent seasons. These sessions are a crucial element of our Club's well-being and it has been decided to inject some momentum into reviving interest in the sessions. It is recognised that many members feel uneasy about simply turning up at the Club for a game and not knowing anyone present. Consequently, with effect from Saturday 19 April and until further notice, Clayton will invigilate these sessions in order to help introduce any member who wishes to join a mix-in with other members present who they may or may not already know. Please endeavour, therefore, to give him and other members your support by making Saturday afternoon tennis (2.00 p.m. onwards) and Wednesday evening tennis (5.30p.m.) part of your social diary!

We wish you an enjoyable 2011 season!