

Northants Squash Racquets Association

Annual General Meeting 2018

Date	Friday, February 9 th 2018	Time	19.30	Attendees	NSRA Committee, NSRA Members
Venue	Saints Squash Club, Birchfield Road, Northampton			Invitees	All NSRA Members

Minutes and Actions

- **Those present:**

Mike Broadbent
Simon Yates
Martin Sawyer
James Sheehan
Ray Chessum
Andy Bowen
Stuart Tippleston
Simon North
Alex Bensley (joined midway)
Joe Hyde (joined midway)

- **Apologies** (Peter Kerby, Ian Holmes, James Roberts)

- **Minutes adopted from AGM 2017**

Outstanding action from last year's AGM is the county court review. MB to make a start on this.

- **Committee:** Ray Chessum elected to the committee as Junior Development officer. All other positions remain the same, except for removal of the position of Junior Chair – currently Sam Willis.

Committee therefore sits as:

President: Peter Kerby

Vice President: James Sheehan

Chair: Mike Broadbent

Vice Chair: Martin Sawyer

Secretary: Simon Yates

Treasurer: Ian Holmes

League Secretary: Simon Yates

Junior Development Officer: Ray Chessum

County Development Officer: Sam Willis

Publicity Officer: Stuart Tippleston

- **Adoption of Accounts:** the balance sheet as presented here is missing 3 x team registration fees which have now been paid, so income is actually greater than last year.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31ST

	31/1/2018	31/5/2017
INCOME		
COMPETITIONS		-69.00
LEAGUE	660.00	1219.68
REGISTRATION FEES	584.00	784.00
INTEREST	0.38	0.89
REFUND OF ESR AFFILIATION FEES	184.88	382.13
	1429.26	2301.70
EXPENDITURE		
COUNTY MATCHES	858.75	440.45
JUNIOR COACHING	150.00	1086.00
	1008.75	1526.45
EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	420.51	791.25
OPENING BALANCE	2206.70	1415.45
BALANCE AT YEAR END	2627.21	2206.70
ASSETS		
CURRENT ACCOUNT	1159.29	312.92
DEPOSIT ACCOUNT	1467.92	1893.78

- **Chairman's Report (attached – see end of minutes)**

This deals with: junior Grand Prix, schools development programmes, junior county coaching, newsletters, CAN and England Squash involvement, county engagement day, and plans for 2018.

- **County League Report:** Spring racketball leagues to start as quickly as possible once the winter season has finished, aiming for an eight-week long season.

Summer squash leagues to commence beginning of June, aiming for an eight to ten week season.

Next winter season: whilst we are very keen to keep the main season of squash at four divisions, it is accepted that should there not be sufficient teams to do so we will consolidate down to three divisions. Every effort will be made between now and then to encourage further teams into the NSRA leagues in an effort to get it to thirty-two, at which point four divisions is feasible.

Cup competition: the experiment run this season, incorporating leagues 3&4 and 1&2, received mixed reviews, and we now find ourselves in the interesting position of having one team (Market Harborough 3) managing to get to the finals of both the cup competitions they are in – which then means that we won't be able to run all four finals on night. So we won't do that again. For next season we will look at introducing having bigger cup competitions between two divisions, or something along those lines. Anything to introduce some change.

- **Discussion points raised by MHSRC:**

- Subs for matches where costs are shared – this can be very high at certain venues and some of our players have commented about this. It is particularly hard if we have junior players in the team.
 - Noted. This issue will largely disappear as it is unlikely that we'll have any more seasons with a home/away/plus-one format. Comment about juniors also noted... One suggestion is that for those clubs whose match fees are significantly higher than others to only collect the lower amount from the visiting team and then collect more from their own team when playing somewhere cheaper.
- Squash Levels scores – these appear to be somewhat inflated for Northants, compared to what we are seeing in Leicestershire, comparing playing levels etc. I have spoken to Richard Bickers about it and he is prepared to implement something if we want, but perhaps this will settle down the more matches are played and especially where players play in both leagues? Can cause ranking issues where players at MHSRC play in both counties.
 - Nothing we can do about this, it'll work out in the end. MB knows Richard Bickers quite well and he is ludicrously busy, so not going to use up his time with this. The data in SL from the NSRA goes back to 2010, so it's pretty comprehensive - however it will become more accurate as the seasons progress.
- PAR scoring across the board – a resounding success we would say and we hope it continues! Need Leicestershire to see sense next, as I can attest to (see my latest Leicestershire match report on Facebook for proof!)
 - Noted and thanks.
- Website – some are finding it a bit hard to navigate. Also, why can't it have its own domain name, rather than a sub-domain of 'biglifediary.com', e.g. nsra.org.uk?
 - Big Life Diary is the site that contains all the code for running the leagues. It in turn feeds into http://www.northantssquash.co.uk/events/event_fixtures.php?id=160 - you can get info from either. From the home page of northantssquash.co.uk it's only one click to take you into the leagues so not sure how it could be made easier to navigate... however there is a lot of information missing (many thanks to Alison at Harborough for her comprehensive review) so steps are in place to improve it.
- NSRA logo – it looks outdated and could do with updating. Perhaps time to broach the subject?
 - Agreed. New one to be commissioned in the summer. Suggestions as to style and colours encouraged.

- **Discussion point raised by Alex Bensley on the use of Squash Levels:** having experienced the use of Squash Levels in the Leicestershire leagues, which determines a team's playing order weekly based on the SL score of each player, Alex has suggested we adopt something similar in the NSRA leagues.

One of the attractions to this is that on return fixtures there is every chance that you will be playing someone different; and there is also the possibility for players who are improving to get games higher up the order.

Alex's suggestion finds favour with the committee and a trial of this method will be implemented for the summer leagues.

Please note! ***This will mean that team captains will have to enter results online within 48 hours of the match being played.***

Should this be successful in the summer leagues we will look at using the same system in next season's winter leagues. Many thanks to Alex for attending the meeting and making the suggestion.

- **Corby Squash campaign:** Report from James Roberts –

We are now trying to organise the return match v Brackley in the Summer in our neck of the woods (venue to be determined). Hopefully we can use this as another way to engage the media and gain the good level of exposure we enjoyed last time at Brackley, if not expand it.

Tom Pursglove MP has engaged with the Minister for Sport, Tracey Crouch, and she has provided details of funding streams, especially Sport England. He plans to ask for a future adjournment debate on squash provision and its benefits at a later date – hopefully all the attention we are currently trying to give to the health benefits of squash and the shocking treatment of it by the large fitness chains will help in this regard.

More locally, I have obtained the original plans for the extension at Corby Rugby Club, which would have brought 3 courts to Corby (not 2 as originally thought) and which was granted planning permission before the funding disappeared! I am currently trying to organise a meeting with the Rugby Club to discuss this further and see what the art of the possible might be.

The NSRA Committee is fully behind this campaign and we will lend as much material help as we can when James asks for it.

We suggest that Corby run a team in the summer leagues – perhaps using a variety of venues for their home matches – which will give James the opportunity to make a report every week.

- **AOB**

Sport relief is on Saturday 17th March – can anyone put on an event to support this and get some media exposure as a result? Quick action needed if so.

County Closed: MB apologises for seriously dropping the ball on the County Closed, which has now been rescheduled for 21st/22nd April. Email about it due out in a couple of weeks. We will use Squash Levels to determine senior seedings.

County teams: MB apologises for not relaying county team results on his regular newsletters. Please can county captains send results to MB for onward broadcast to the other Northants players.

- **Next NSRA Committee Meeting: Friday 18th May, Saints Squash Club, 7.30pm.**

NSRA Chairman's Report 09-02-18

Activities undertaken since the last NSRA committee meeting on 4th September 2017:

Northants & District Junior Grand Prix

After a fantastic launch event in June 2017 – where we had 64 children at Daventry for a graded tournament – the first half of the GP season has taken place at Lings, Daventry, Brackley, and Dallington.

The series has taken off in a way I did not expect. My initial thoughts were that at each round we would be doing well if we got between 30 and 40 entrants; so when 60 turned up at Lings for the first round there was a bit of a panic in getting all the box leagues sorted and the matches underway.

Subsequent to that I've had everyone enter online prior to the event. Daventry attracted 45 players (half-term weekend – won't do that again), Brackley 54, and Dallington 60. The greatest concentration of children come from Lings and Brackley, with Buckingham not far behind; the rest made up from Diana's, Harborough, Dallington, Daventry, and Carlton.

To date, 86 children have played in a Grand Prix at one time or another, with a core contingent of 45 having played in three or more of the events. With three rounds to go before the big finals in June, my hope is that we'll hit 100 and then get them all together at Daventry.

The atmosphere at the tournaments is terrific – it feels like a proper community and we have brought together a large number of parents and their kids in celebration of squash. The standard is also getting significantly better and whilst I'm not convinced that we can compete at inter-county level yet, we might be on our way.

Junior County Coaching

We took over county coaching from Sam Willis after she ran the first one at Diana's in September. Happily, Ray and I have had assistance from Cameron (Ray's son) and Martin Hall, the Brackley coach; and for tomorrow's session at Lings I've also enlisted the services of Owen Wilson, one of the Lings U19 juniors. Sarah Parkins from Lings who got her L1 last summer is also helping out.

We've been getting between 20 and 30 children attending CC, from the same spread of clubs that compete in the GPs. In theory we shouldn't be offering it to Buckingham, Harborough, and Carlton... but in my opinion, the more the merrier and it helps to build the community.

At the last county coaching date of this season we are hosting Neil Guirey, who heads up the England Squash Aspire programme. In theory he's going to be there to determine which of our juniors can join Aspire but realistically there will only be one or two that are of sufficient standard. So I hope that he can give us some guidance as to where we're going with our junior training – we are having a coaches conference over the lunch period, and anyone with input on Northants junior coaching is very welcome to join us (free lunch!)

Schools Programmes

We ran another primary school tryout day at Daventry in October – this time with approx. 70 children in two sessions through the afternoon. This one yielded results, with the Saturday juniors club now regularly getting 10 to 15 children coming along. Another one planned for springtime, date to be confirmed.

West Haddon Primary have also hired Daventry to run similar sessions themselves – which, according to the teacher I speak to, have been really well received.

Daventry also now has a few additional members, some of whom have joined as a result of their children becoming involved.

In Northampton I set up an after-school club for Boothville Primary School, who take 15 children along every Monday for squash and squash-related activities. The aforementioned Owen Wilson has been delivering these sessions aided by the teachers and these too are very popular with the children. Next step with this lot is to get them down on a Saturday morning.

To date I haven't managed to roll out the school initiative to the level I originally anticipated, so this is very high on my agenda for the first half of 2018.

Newsletters

Two sent since the last committee meeting, with open rates of 30% and 33%. They seem to be generally well received although the open rate has dropped since the first one a year ago.

CAN (County Association Network)

I volunteered to be on the exec. Committee of CAN when it was officially formed last July, and we have had one member and one committee meeting so far. England Squash have changed their stance quite dramatically in the last six months or so, recognising CAN formally and genuinely asking for its help. Which, in most cases, has been freely given with good results.

The next stage for CAN is to appoint various expert consultants that county associations can go to for advice and assistance. I've said I'll happily help on the marketing side of things and maybe a bit with setting up of school initiatives; however I am a little sceptical of how much use I genuinely can be given my small amount of experience... we'll see.

England Squash Council Meeting and AGM

I attended the Council and AGM in November, and voted in favour of the revised articles of association. In the end it was a vote overwhelmingly won by ES, although they had definitely been worried that the county associations (there were more in attendance at the AGM than had been for decades) were about to vote them out of existence. The landslide victory for the governing body secures funding of £8m from Sport England. I found that there was a positive vibe at the Council meeting, which was echoed by the likes of Heidi Leseur (Bucks) who said it was the best one she'd attended.

Whilst there I managed to talk to Paul Abel from Notts and Jo Wallis from Derbys about where we're going as a region. We're all on the same page in terms of really wanting to develop the sport but we are at very different stages. The Squash East Midlands regional forum meets formally at the rescheduled junior regional closed on 4th March, at Leicester Squash Club.

County Engagement Day, Manchester

Ray and I travelled up to Manchester to take part in the England Squash County Engagement day which saw a number of county representatives brought together to discuss aspects of squash with the ES staff, and to share some best practice. ES stuck me on the panel, to talk about the schools initiatives. Quite fun in the end, and hopefully useful to some. They made a video about it which I've put on the Facebook page.

Paul Carter Coaching Workshop

The day after the engagement day, and with something of a hangover, Ray and I then attended this workshop at the National Squash Centre. We watched a coaching session with some of England's elite players (George Parker, Millie Tomlinson, Richie Fallows) and then had sessions with Carter and the likes of David Champion.

A fascinating morning that also yielded a contact with a player called Rich Green, who lives in Badby and plays squash for the Army. He's now helping Ray at Daventry every Saturday morning, proving to be very useful indeed.

Plans for 2018

- Set up after-school clubs at Daventry and Lings for the existing juniors
- Set up after-school club at Diana's – this probably needs more juniors first
- Roll out schools programme to the rest of Northants
- Complete Grand Prix series, organise next season's
- Set up a junior team league
- Fight the closure of OWs Squash Club
- Put on exhibition match at Daventry (currently talking to Daryl Selby)
- Put on at least one Copper tournament
- Organise another half-term camp at Lings for May (currently talking to Mark Fuller)