

Isle of Wight

Table Tennis League

May 2019 Newsletter

Chairman's Message

Hello! After the conclusion of another successful season, we find ourselves having moved headlong into the Summer League, and already a couple of teams are showing themselves as hot contenders in their respective groups. In the "Red" Group, being played at 5pm, Mike Prior seems to be holding together his team very well, as at the time of writing, they have a clear lead at the top. Meanwhile, in the "Wight" Group, no team has been able to pull away yet, but Wight Wiff-waffs, Dinosaurs and Chessel Potters head up the board. Let's hope for plenty of hard-fought matches in the weeks to come.

Recent success stories for our association include a very well-run Finals Night (thanks to Mike P for this, as usual), which saw a good spread of winners and close games – but more importantly, a really nice number of spectators. The competitors really appreciate people giving up their valuable evenings to come and watch a few games and were rewarded with plenty of sounds from the spectators as they got engrossed in the games. The gasps and groans from those watching were reminiscent of Centre Court at Wimbledon! (Or maybe they were just groans...?)

The Premier Pairs League also completed its fixtures recently, and after a close-fought battle, Dan Burns and Hugh Idle came out victorious. An honourable mention must also go to Don Hobbs and Jim Hall, who finished in second place; nice to see Jim playing again after his trip Down Under, and judging by how sharp his form is, I suspect the beer and barbies took second place to table tennis!

For those of you who couldn't make it to our EGM, called to decide whether we continue with our current use of the TT365 website or commit ourselves to following Table Tennis England's advice and use their new solution when it is launched, I need to tell you that the meeting voted unanimously to continue with TT365. I feel this news story still has plenty of developments to come, and I will make sure the members are kept informed about any future developments.

I also wanted to mention a vacancy that has arisen recently within the Management Committee, that of Minutes Secretary. Maggie Preston did a sterling job until she recently left the position, and she will make a tough act to follow, but we really need someone in this vital role. If you want to take an interest in the workings of the Association, and give something tangible back to Island Table Tennis, please make yourself known to any of the Committee. We would love to have some fresh blood come in to help us out.

One recent bit of news that might help us connect better, both locally and nationally, is that we now have a brand new Instagram account. If you're on Instagram, come and follow us by searching for @isleofwight_tabletennis; if you've no idea what I'm talking about, get yourself an account and join the fun! If you manage to take any decent action shot photos from this year's Summer League, feel

free to send them over to Debbie or myself and we will see if we can get them published in one form of media or another – though please ask the players in your photos out of courtesy.

Finally, the annual Presentation evening will take place on Friday 30th August at, 7pm at the Lakeside Hotel, Wootton Bridge. Tickets can be acquired from Martin Dove, please contact him by e-mail at martin.dove@blueyonder.co.uk or mobile (07971 271625) and will be available from 24/05. Opening bargain price is £10, but be quick, as they sold out last year – and also, the tickets go up to £15 from 31/07 onwards. See you there!

Best wishes,

Alex Rorke.

PS - all suggestions, ideas and comments always welcome: alexrorke@hotmail.co.uk

News

Tom Johnson excelled at the English National Paralympic Championships

Tom recently won gold and bronze medals at the National Championships held in Grantham on 6th and 7th April.

In the Category 7 Class singles he played world ranked No. 2 and 2016 Paralympic gold medallist Will Bayley. Despite losing 3 straight games to Bayley, Tom gave an impressive performance and was complimented by Bayley after the match. Tom went on to qualify in 3rd place and gained the bronze medal.

Tom also participated in the Class B Open Singles, which included players with less disability; Tom was in a group of 5 and played a round robin, only dropping one game in the whole session to win the gold medal.



Tom and Will Bayley

Finals Night

Finals night was very well supported and impressively organised by Mike Prior. Everything ran smoothly and all the matches were finished before 10 pm. The spectators were treated to some excellent action and exciting games. As the results were sent to members by Mike soon after the event, I won't list them again, but here are some photos kindly taken by Toby Woolgar and Danny Burns.



Temeesha and Anna in the Ladies

Mixed Doubles Action





Ricky in action in the Men's Doubles



Dave and Mike in the Over 70's



Garry and Heather in the Super Vets Handicap

Hard Bat Tournament

This was a great fun event organised by Mike, which everyone really enjoyed. Martin Johnstone lost out to Simon Proffitt in the singles, but luckily, son Lewis was on hand to ensure a victory for the Johnstone family in the doubles, where (despite playing in his first ever tournament) he partnered Simon in a victory over Peter Clarke and Maggie Preston. Well done Lewis!

Cadet and Junior Tournaments

In her last season as a junior, Temeesha took the title, but it was a close-run victory with Joe, Hugh and Temeesha all on one win each. Joe went on to take the Cadet title.

Island Games Sponsorship

The good news was received this week that the Isle of Wight Table Tennis team for the Island Games have received sponsorship from Trigg & Co Estate Agents. The Games in Gibraltar start on 6th July 2019 and we wish our team the very best of luck. If you would like to find out more about the Island Games click on the table tennis icon.



Summer League

Alex has already mentioned that the Summer League is well underway. In the next newsletter there will be a full report on the league, so please send me any photographs that you can. These don't need to be high quality to go in the newsletter so any would be welcome! I will be sending occasional reports to the Observer as well.

Premier League 2019

by Ian Loosemoore



After six intense weeks an exciting Premier League (PL) season came to an end on April 24th. The Untouchaballs won the league with Dan Burns unbeaten and Hugh Idle registering a 70% win average. Follically Challenged (Don Hobbs & Jim Hall) pipped Spinalot (Alex Rorke & Rob Smith) for second place on games won.

PL2019 was of a high standard as befitted a competition where the Island's top players competed. All the players were a credit to themselves and the sport. Over the six weeks 15 matches

were played comprising a total of 296 sets! There were 23 5-set games, 22 4-setters and 31 straight set wins. There were four 5-0's, four 4-1's, and seven 3-2's.



Jim and Don take on Alex and Rob

There was no shortage of close matches. The players will tell you that every match won in the PL is a real achievement with no quarter asked or given and certainly no gimmies. As an observer, I'd say the PL2019 standard was higher than 2018 and the competition fiercer. The pairings reflected the need to combine abilities and compatibility. Team pairings are always an interesting conversation. The aim isn't to artificially level the playing field but to match up the players in a way that tests them. In any sport there are always some dominant players (think Federer, Djokovic & Nadal in tennis) but you never get those players ranked or rated below them not believing that on their day they can't beat them. To in some way "handicap" the best players is insulting to the others who want to beat them fair and square and know that any victory (team or individual) is on merit and not virtue of manipulation.

I know that there are some (not unfairly) who think that Dan plus A.N.Other is a route to winning the PL. The Burns man can't help being quite good at our sport... but he was taken to the brink by Alex and whereas in PL2018 Dan went unbeaten without dropping a set, this season he dropped 7 sets and was pushed hard in many of his matches. Let's not forget, Hugh only lost 3 matches and had a 70% average. When teams were decided in December Hugh's first division average was barely 60%.

After every match players nominated a player of the match and in the end of tournament questionnaire, they were all asked to nominate their player of the tournament. Last year the winner was Temeesha. This year Hugh got the vote.

Hugh being presented with his award by Danny and Rhys Burtenshaw, representative of sponsor Trigg & Co.



Dan was unbeaten, Alex just lost the once and Don just twice, but it is the player that punches above their weight, shows most improvement and overall impresses their peers that wins the player of the tournament award. Well done Hugh.



Tom and Simon

A shout out too for the still improving Tom Johnson and for Jim Hall both of whom contributed much to PL2019 and left nothing out on the table. Last PL season Jim didn't win a match. This season he won 5 matches and was clearly sharper and improved after his time in Australia where he played at a high club level.

The feedback forms showed a 95% satisfaction rate (92% in 2018). There are always things that can be improved and the challenge is to provide the players with all the right set-up, organisation and support that mean they can play to their best and enjoy the competition. There can be no resting on laurels for 2020, but 95% suggests that a lot of things are being done right.

Those players new to PL2019 were all competitive and made a significant contribution to each week's entertainment and quality. It was interesting that Rob commented on the lack of any prima donnas. Several players commented on the good atmosphere and spirit of the PL. Real competition, respect for the opposition and a sense of identity fostered this environment. Many players were keen to have a longer PL season with up to 8 teams....subject to player availability and players coming through the ranks this is distinctly possible.

PL2019 was rounded off with an Awards evening held at Ryde Castle attended by players and sponsors Trigg & Co. A relaxed evening of food, drink and chat was a fine way to bring the PL season to a close.



To some it can appear that the PL is exclusive and that they are outsiders looking through the window at another world that they are denied access to. The Premiership *is* another level and it has things that make it different from standard league play, but it is always open to those good enough. In football, The Premiership is seen as a step up from the Football League. There are benefits that feed down the pyramid and aspiration to reach the PL can only be fed by PL being different and being a reward for those prepared to put in the hard yards to improve and aim to compete with and beat the best. Talent gets you so far. Combined with hard work it gets you to the top of the pyramid. Graeme Souness said this recently in reference to Manchester City and Liverpool ... no-one dared argue!! So, come on Conal, Ricky, Ed, Sean, Joe et al - pull your fingers out and get Premmed up!!

Congratulations to the winners and thanks to all involved including those who helped set tables up and those who came to watch matches. Thanks for a great PL season. I hope we can get to do it again in PL2020 if given the green light by IWTTA. Until next time....

From the Archives

In our feature on the English Table Tennis Association Newsletters from the past, we have now reached the 1950's, when most of the Isle of Wight coverage centred around a child protégée named Derek Grant. Who was he and does anyone know of him? The first mention came in 1952:

DEREK GRANT is the youngest affiliated player in the Isle of Wight T.T.L. He is now eleven years old, but actually played in his first league match when he was only seven, and could hardly see over the tabletop. Last season he played in the 3rd Division team of Ventnor and St. Wilfrid's, who have been 1st Division Champions several times, and include five past champions in their membership. Father, Mr. Teddy Grant, has been responsible for coaching young Derek from the dining-room table stage, and hopes that Derek will follow his star, Victor Barna, who gave an exhibition in the Island earlier in the year.

In March 1953, there was an advert for Table Tennis training courses on the Island, and these were advertised regularly throughout the 50's, but there was never any mention of the venue.

HOLIDAY TRAINING COURSES Isle of Wight: 23rd", 30th May, 1953. 4 Men's vacancies remain. Priority to non-London players, over 21. Apply: JACK CARRINGTON, 21, Clayton Avenue, Upminster, Essex

The newsletter was now published monthly during the League season and in the February 1955 issue there was a major article on the young Derek Grant, who was obviously making a name for himself. Here is an extract from the article:

INFANT PRODIGY

AS the son of a table tennis player, 13-year-old Derek Grant of Ventnor was destined to play the game almost from the cradle and such is his progress that his Dad, Ted Grant, chairman of the Isle of Wight League must indeed be very proud. Almost from the time he could first walk, a ball has been Derek's constant companion, and when he was old enough to hold a bat dad started his table tennis training on the dining room table. In a very short time, he became an infant prodigy and can probably claim to be the youngest player ever to have taken part in a League match, for he was only seven years old when first called upon. At the age of thirteen Derek is in his third successive season in the Isle of Wight League where he plays with his father and has the proud boast of being the youngest player in the First Division. Undoubtedly here is an infant prodigy who may one day be one of the big names of table tennis.



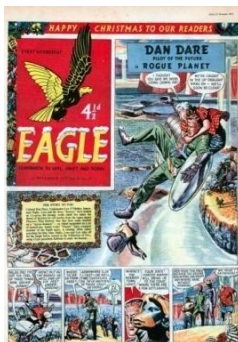
In the March 1955 issue Derek was still creating a stir:

Thirteen-year-old Derek Grant, of Ventnor, made rings round the Senior opposition at Southampton, and Ted Grant, his father, and Chairman of the Isle of Wight League, was there to watch him do it. Just as well he was, perhaps, since Ken Grace, the Southampton Chairman who organised play, kept casting covetous eyes in Derek's direction!

The Island was also mentioned in the 'Around the Leagues' feature, we now had 48 teams, and it seemed that Cowes St Mary's Guild were the Isle of Wight's top team:

Formed in 1923, the Isle of Wight Table Tennis League has advanced considerably in the post-war years. There are now four divisions, two of these being sub-divided, making 48 League teams from 20 clubs. Ventnor St. Winifrid's, one of the founder clubs now have the youngest team in the First Division with 13-year-old Derek Grant its youngest player. Barring a miracle, Isle of Wight Division I champions this year will be Cowes St Mary's Guild.

Does anyone remember The Eagle Comic? Yes, lots of you of course!

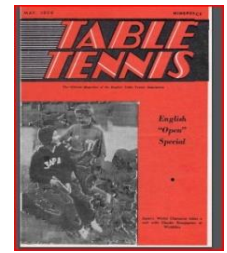


In 1955 they sponsored a boy's table tennis event and Derek Grant did well again:

Most exciting of the four children's events was the Senior Boys; the final of which saw a tremendous duel between hard hitters Donald Twigg, of Holloway, London, and Derek Grant, of Ventnor, Isle of Wight. At 19-16 in the third, and deciding game, Grant looked to have a winning lead

but, at this stage, Twigg courageously hit out to gain a 22-20 victory which had the enthusiastic audience cheering madly.

For the rest of the 1950's Derek was not often out of the news, winning Junior tournaments all over England and abroad. As the 50's drew to a close, Derek ended his junior career and was mentioned in an article 'Reflections on Junior Table Tennis' in the May 1959 issue:



REFLECTIONS ON JUNIOR TABLE TENNIS

Derek Grant, junior international and former Eagle champion ends this year a long junior career, which has lasted over eight seasons. Introduced into the game and into a senior team at the exceptional age of ten years, this almost veteran junior has made steady progress and travelled thousands of miles to tournaments ranging from the Isle of Wight to Paris and all over England. He has made many friends both junior and senior from these expeditions.

Next time we find out if Derek carried on with his successes into the senior game throughout the 1960's.

To finish.... Gordon Banks



Why is the famous goalkeeper Gordon Banks, who recently passed away, being featured in a table tennis newsletter, I hear you ask? Well, the advice he gave to a budding young goalkeeper in Leicester, the city where he spent most of his playing career, was '**Play table tennis – that will help to sharpen up your reflexes and your hand-eye co-ordination**'. So, if you have any children/grandchildren who play in goal perhaps they should be taking up table tennis as well!

Thanks to Tom Flood from St Lawrence for sending me this snippet from The 'I' newspaper.

Thank you for reading. The next newsletter will be in July. All contributions are very much appreciated so do please send any suggestions, articles or photos to: deboldyard@hotmail.co.uk