

Club Captain's Report 2012-13

The club provides social play, social events and for the brave (or foolhardy), plenty of competitive tennis. We are active in summer and winter, in leagues and knock-out, doubles, mixed and singles and as Club Captain, I'm reporting on how we did competitively and for newer members, how you can be involved.

Competitive tennis is another dimension to the club game and when Rudyard said to meet Triumph and Disaster as the same, he'd obviously never played in the Middlesex League!

Firstly, a big thank you to each of the captains. It's a thankless task at times and we have all suffered from 'Captain's Law' i.e. that the number of phone calls, emails, text messages to find players is directly proportional to the likelihood that the match will be rained off at 6:15! Every captain has their own system of spreadsheets, tattered calendars, notebooks, faded phone lists and the first triumph is to get 6 people at the right place at the right time. So a big thank you to the captains, Gill, Kate, Kate, Danny, Byron and Fred.

As players, competitive tennis can also hold many challenges: dashing from work early, or remembering to bring desert, or worrying if the knee will hold up or where on earth is that strange tucked away club anyway and how do I avoid the North Circular! But it also pits you against new opposition, new styles of play, different surfaces and develops a new side to your game, as our Pavilion teams have learnt this year, in their first full season. Astonishingly, 86 Muswell Hill members were involved in the summer league last year. More importantly, that translates into 252 commitments to represent the club by playing in a match which is a sign of a very healthy club indeed. So a big thank you to all the players who have been involved.

As today, March 8th is International Women's day, I shall start with the Ladies teams.

It was a tricky summer for the Muswell Hill ladies, with all three teams hit by injury problems. Necks, knees, backs and an emergency appendectomy took its toll on team numbers and results. The second and third teams both managed to avoid relegation, with the thirds finishing fifth in Division 6 and the seconds finishing sixth in Division 3. A lot of people helped out, including new recruits Clara and Rosalba, and great work by Captains Gill, Kate E and Kate L in terms of juggling players and not "tie-ing" people.

Unfortunately the first team didn't quite manage to hang on for a third season in the Intermediate division, finishing seventh by one point. So it's back to Division 1 this summer but hopefully it will be a short stay.

Once again there was a shortage of players for the Middlesex Cup, so we borrowed two of Robby's ladies, Chrissie and Sue, and had a very close match on the hardest of courts at Regent's Park but were eventually beaten!

It wasn't all doom and gloom, though, as we were promoted in the AEGON competition, so it's up to Division 2 this summer.

The winter teams are frantically catching up with all those matches cancelled because of the snow, and in fact the first team are playing tonight, but both teams are looking comfortable in the middle of their divisions. [unless it's raining!]

On the men's side, congratulations go to the men's IV team, who captained by Fred won promotion to Division 7. The men's third team were a comfortable 3rd in Div 6 and Byron has stepped down as captain this year, handing the reins to Tim Brennan who is working his troops into a training frenzy during the winter months, so beware Div 6!

Two of our top men's players Dan Lynton and "Big Dave", left in search of Premier League tennis, the effects of which rippled through the men's teams. There was much beating of chests before it was decided to scratch our men's top team, meaning the first team were referred to as the "team formerly known as the second team" all summer. Danny did a great job, smoothing egos and rounding up new troops and was rewarded by the fact that despite finishing the season in the relegation zone, percentages and matches played seems to have kept them in Div 1, where they will this year be captained by Jeremy.

So for a small club, we have a very healthy spread of competitive tennis to offer members, some very dedicated captains, loyal team players and hopefully an injury free season to look forward to in 2013.

Claire