

Club Captain's Report 2015-16

A year of highs and lows

The annual match report is full of winning and losing, but 2015 saw us lose two very special team players.

Janet Pugsley, was a member for many years first at Muswell Hill, then Coolhurst and then back at Muswell. In her remembrance, Coolhurst hosted a ladies tournament and on a beautiful, warm, sunny day last October, 16 of us from several clubs met to play in Janet's honour. The tournament was themed pink and we raised over £200 for the Ayrshire Cancer Support charity.

In November, we lost Jane Steele who was, without doubt, the most colourful, charismatic person with whom I've ever shared a court. She played with a freedom and passion which could startle both her partner and the opposition in equal measure. Although quite different in personality, Jane and Janet shared a competitive spirit, a great sense of fun and both made a huge contribution to the team and club and will be sadly missed.

Aegon Competition (formerly NCL)

For the Aegon Summer league you need a team of 4 players and matches are played on Sunday mornings. All 4 players first have to battle away in singles, then play 2 doubles rubbers where you can only mix pairs according to ratings. If it's all even after 6 rubbers, the rules now dictate a 'shoot-out': 2 singles victims must be nominated and the other lucky players get to play doubles, so 3 more rubbers are played, each of a match tiebreak.

In the Aegon competition, Muswell Hill has a Queen's Club double in 2016! The men's team, captained by Dan Lynton won convincing promotion from Division 3 to 2; Dan led from the front, winning 8 out of 8 matches without dropping a set. This summer they will host Hurlingham and get a visit to Queen's Club as their reward. The women won promotion from Division 2 back up to Division 1 and Rutvica has been persuaded to be our new captain for 2016. But the draw has been unkind to Queen's Club, and we shall host them and celebrate by wearing all kinds of coloured outfits!

Middlesex Cup

The Middlesex cup is a doubles only knock-out competition, requiring teams of 6 and the order you play the opposite pairs is determined by pulling from the hat at the start of the fixture. Our ladies battled through a round of the Middlesex Cup in the summer, finally losing 5-4 to Virgin Active. In

the winter, the Middlesex cup is Mixed only and after two hard fought matches in the windiest conditions I have encountered in 40 years of tennis, we shall be playing the final of Division 3 this Sunday 6th March against Regent's Park Will to Win. Please let it be a calm day!

Post Meeting Note: A very closely fought final which went to the final rubber... with Muswell Hill victorious. Picture to follow...

Middlesex Summer League (6 teams)

Men's 1st team will stay in Division 1 and we may lose Dan Lynton back to Coolhurst. Men's 2nd team won promotion under Haider's captaincy to Division 4. Men's 3rd team finished a strong 3rd in Division 8 under Fred's enduring captaincy, where the two star players, Noah and Ben have a combined age not even half of Fred's!

History was made on the ladies side, with a rare visit to the Premier League for the first team. There was a decided reluctance to play up, so the squad used just 8 players all summer! Our goal was to get more points than the lowest club did last season, which we achieved! Ladies 2nd team, although finishing second last, will continue in Division 3 this summer which feels at the right level for the revitalised team supported by Natalia and Lorraine G.

Winter season - 6 competitions

In the Winter floodlit, we have a mixed, 2 ladies teams, 1 men's team and 2 vets teams. The Ladies 1st should be safe in Division 1 pending a good result against Mayfield on Monday night. The Ladies 2nd team, captained by Kate Engineer are in good shape to be promoted to the 3rd Division thanks to Natalia and Lorraine George continuing to improve.

The Men's winter team look set for promotion this winter under Danny White's captaincy, which will take them into Division 4 next winter. Grainne continued the captaincy of the Vets first team, who hope to have won promotion back to Division 1. Kate Engineer took over as captain of the Vets second team, who have used this season to find their level with a whole new squad of players who are really enjoying the format of mixed and ladies/mens doubles but they may not hang on to Division 4.

On a serious note, as Club Captain, a reminder to any new team players and captains of some of the written and unwritten rules of team play: If a player has played in the team above more than twice, they are 'tied' and cannot play in your squad. As a captain it is your responsibility to check with players and the captain of the team above, that you are not fielding ineligible players. This also

applies to players who have joined us from other clubs – they must not have played in the competition for another club in the same season. In the scramble to find sufficient bodies for a match, this can be overlooked, but is it very important. In the best scenario, any points won by an illegible player will be deducted from the final match score by the organiser of the league – in the worst scenario, a Muswell Hill Methodist team can be disqualified which means having to start a team from the lowest division the next season, but more significantly, harming the overall reputation of the club in what is a very close-knit tennis community.

Finally, despite saying captaincy can be a thankless task I'd like to thank all the captains for volunteering their time. The simple challenge of getting the right people in the right place at the right time AND for the weather to stay fine, can try the patience! Thank you also to Gill Parrott for sorting out the fixtures, and court booking duties. And a big thank you to Gill Taylor who steps down as Ladies 3rd team captain after many years and hands over to Mary to marshal the troops for this season.

Stay fit and enjoy your tennis.

Claire