

Club Captain's Report 2024-2025

Changing of the guard

The theme of the last report was 'Going from strength to strength', as we grew the number of players competing and introduced 'squad training' on the ladies' side. This year's theme is introducing lots of changes as we have multiple changing of captains. We have some new competitions and overall, we have seen an increase in the total number of members playing matches.

We continue to welcome new members to the teams and have focused on how best to integrate them into practice sessions and ultimately matches as smoothly as possible. Both the ladies' and men's squads are consequently looking healthy in terms of strength and depth, with practice and coaching sessions well attended. A big thank you to Sylvia who has managed the steady requests to join the club and organise our now well-oiled 'Play-in' routine.

As the AGM always falls at the crucial end to the winter league, I'd like to start with that, as well as a shout out for a new competition and a final to be played on Sunday!

Winter season 2024/25 - 10 competitions

Winter leagues: 1 x mixed team, 3 x ladies' teams, 3 x men's teams, 2 x vets teams, and 1x ladies' Middlesex winter cup team (new!), which is where we shall start...

Middlesex cup

The Middlesex cup is a doubles only knockout competition, requiring teams of 6. The order you play the opposition pairs is determined by pulling from the hat at the start of the fixture.

This winter we re-entered the Middlesex winter cup for ladies, captained by Vivian. The team have made it to the final, which will be played on Sunday 16th March at home at 10am, against Finchley Manor.

Each match is the best of 9 rubbers, 3 pairs vs 3 pairs, and it's already produced the tightest match possible. After 4+ hours of combat, Grainne and Gill won the crucial match tiebreak 10-5 to beat a very strong Conway 5-4. Poor Vivian's nerves were in tatters, as non-playing captain that day!

We wish the team all the best for Sunday's final.

Winter floodlit league

Mixed – were relegated to Division 2 in 2023 but bounced straight back up last year. Have struggled again this winter in Division 1, so are likely to be relegated with the last match on 19th March. Thanks to Yessica for acting as captain in my absence.

Men's winter teams

Men I – captained by Jeremy, have experienced a similar yo-yo effect after smashing their way to Division 1 last winter, only to return to Division 2 at the end of this season.

Men II – Division 5 – captained by Tim Brennan, have benefited from a larger overall pool of strong men players and have won promotion to Division 4.

Men III – Division 8 – captained by Andrew Wilks, after winning promotion to Division 7 last winter, have consolidated and stayed mid-table.

Ladies' winter teams

Ladies I – Division 1 – captained by Vivian, currently in 2nd place – were keen to ensure that all the of extended squad (8 people in winter) got to play matches and stay sharp for the summer.

Ladies II – Division 4 – captained by Claire Richardson, have competed strongly, challenging for promotion straight back to Division 3, but have not quite made it this year.

Ladies III – Division 6 – led by another new captain, Kathleen Tuck, still have a match left to play which could see them hanging on in Division 6.

Vets winter league

Another first-time captain, Dave Sharp, leads Vets I this year. After relegation from Division 1 last year, the team have smashed it, top of the table in Division 2 with 2 games in hand.

Captained by Sally Meacher, Vets II are also top of Division 3, with 1 match left to play.

Middlesex summer league 2023 (6 teams) finishing positions

Ladies I – captained by Grainne, another year staying in Intermediate, finishing a very strong 3rd.

Ladies II – won promotion from Division 3 to Division 2 thanks to a really strong team spirit and a lot of flexibility between the first, second and third team ladies. A big thank you to captains Clare and Claire for negotiating and being flexible when it mattered.

Ladies III – 5th in Division 4 – and staying in Division 4 thanks to making strategic (and legal) use of players from both the second and third teams.

Men I – 4th in Division 2 – stay in Division 2 but squad training is looking very healthy with often 3 courts of first and second team men. Jeremy has adopted some restaurant ideas with some nights having 2 sittings if there is only 1 court to work with!

Men II – 6th in Division 4 thanks to the second team making good strategic use of both first and third team players to stay up.

Men III – 7th in Division 7 – relegated to Division 8 by the finest margin, i.e. less than 2% difference in games won.

Finally

This year we have had the good fortune to be able to build 'squads' rather than teams. The men have at times taken all 3 courts on a Tuesday – thank you Joe for accommodating these practices. With 3

teams on both the men's and ladies' sides, it is the second team which ends up being most fluid, using players from both the team above and the team below. For those who have stood in at the last moment to ensure a fixture goes ahead, or sacrificed themselves playing up or down to ensure we can field a team, thank you.

A big thank you always goes to the captains, and this year we welcome new ones who have stepped in for the winter competitions (Vivian, Kathleen T, Dave S). And a big thank you to Grainne who steps down from the ladies' first team after a decade?

Thank you as always to Gill Parrott being such an awesome 'Fixtures Meister', sorting out the fixtures and on court booking duty for all teams' matches. Thank you to Mike and Ian for ensuring there are always match balls and the courts are fit to play. And again Ian, for chasing us for results and linking these to the website.

Going forward, we shall be entering a team in the midweek 55+ mixed league and it's not too late to get in touch if you are interested in taking part.

Stay fit and enjoy your tennis!

Claire