

Chairman's Report for AGM 8nd July 2010

This is my last day as Chairman and I find it difficult to believe that I have been in the position for the last three years. However, I do believe that it is very good that new blood comes in after a specific term, because we do need change to keep up with the evolution of not only Squash, but now Squash and Racketball.

It seems to me, that Squash is in need of an injection of far more widespread popularity after a time, I can remember anyway in the 1970's, when it was booming. Amazingly though, the standard of the game at the highest level continues to rise every year, but, for some reason, there do not yet seem to be that many players from Hampshire aspiring to reach it. So all the more credit must go to those that are and the coaches/parents for supporting them.

Racketball, on the other hand, is becoming more widely popular and I am absolutely delighted that this is reflected in Wayne Burns, a keen squash and racketball player coming forward for election as my successor. Wayne has served diligently on the Committee for several years and during that time he has not only made a significant contribution generally, but he has also inspired many racketball players by turning what was, not that long ago, a recreation game, into one, where there is now both a Winter and a Summer County League and he has entered Hampshire in the Inter County Championships. With his enthusiasm, expertise and attention to detail, he is the ideal person to be Chairman of Hampshire Squash and Racketball and I wish him every success in it.

I would like to thank all those, we are so lucky to have on the Committee. We are lucky because we need to have such good people. The decisions that any governing body makes these days are becoming increasingly important as sport becomes more regulated and in need of funding. What we all want is to see more players in the County enjoying squash and racketball – boys, girls, men and women, particularly women.

We are also lucky, because most on the Committee are prepared to continue to serve for another season. However, what would happen if they didn't and, when will clubs put forward nominations for the Committee, as they are asked to do each year?

I have, therefore, greatly appreciated both the commitment and effort of those who have attended Committee meetings, because, although reports from those who can't make the meetings do help to keep the Committee informed, people actually being there to discuss the issues does enable more informed decisions to be made and for the Committee, therefore, to have more chance of getting them right.

There are two individuals I do want to mention, because they have been mainstays in keeping, what we all want in our sport, going.

First, David Law, who takes on a huge amount of work and does it extremely well, giving great consideration and attention both to people and administrative detail. You will be aware that his contribution to Squash was recognised by England Squash and we, in Hampshire, couldn't be better represented on the Council of England Squash than by David.

The other person is Tim Lane . Unfortunately Tim has decided to resign and he may want to explain why to you for himself. I just want to say that Tim is one of those increasingly rare sportsmen, who would rather lose a match in a fair contest than win in a slightly dubious one. Everyone draws that line somewhere and he has made it clear, that the line he draws became unacceptably thin last season. He fully accepts that his view differs from that of the majority of squash players, who compete in the leagues, but he cannot endorse Committee decisions feeling the way he does.

If one good thing can come out of this, however, and I really hope it does, it is the realization that we must have people on the Committee au fait with the changing nature of league squash. The league is the biggest part of what we do and we need people on the Committee right now, who play in it, for it to continue to be managed as well as it is and we owe a great deal to our League Secretary Mark Millard for his hard work and common sense in running it.

During Tim's time as Treasurer on the Committee, the finances have been run to the highest standard and we owe that to his dedication, professional skill and considerable expertise. He has been one of the most regular attendees at Committee meetings and his contribution has gone way beyond that of just the finances.

So, a huge thank you Tim for your great service to Hampshire Squash and, although we are sorry you have felt it necessary to resign, we respect your reason for doing so.

There are a number of people, thank goodness, like Tim, but not on the Committee, who have made massive contributions to Hampshire this season as volunteers and it is important that good hands like Elvin Booth, who ran the Hampshire Club Knock Out Cup get a mention. Without his willingness to take it on and the enthusiasm to see it through, a large number of players would have missed out on the enjoyment and thrill of competitive team knock out squash. Thank you Elvin for doing all that again and so well.

The other volunteers are the captains/managers of the teams that represent Hampshire in the Inter County Championships. I had the pleasure of being in a couple of County teams last season and I know the amount of organisation, that has to take place, whether teams are playing at home or a long way away from home and all the consequent arrangements and details that have to be tied up both before and after the event. I hope they will have found the experience rewarding. I know that the team manager of the over 55's was so keen to represent Hampshire, it was suggested to him that he managed the team to ensure selection! He did, he played well and his team is promoted to the Premier next season. What a year 2009/2010 was for him! You will hear later how all our teams did this year and well done to all those players who played around the country for Hampshire and thank you to the captains who got them to the court on time.

The person who really knows what getting County teams out is all about is Stuart Summers and it is great relief that he is prepared to continue as Men's Captain, a job he has done so well for as long I can remember. During that time he has become a family man, yet he still gives up that week end in October to be at the Tournament desk welcoming players to the County Closed.

Involved in both squash and racketball at the level he is, his knowledge is invaluable to the Committee and as older players like me become less involved, I hope that more younger players follow his example, step in and get on to the Committee to ensure that Hampshire moves with the times in the way that players of the future will want.

That is really it for me as Chairman, but I am not dead yet and hope I shall be able do what I can both on and off the court.