



## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Weds 20th November 2024 at 7pm

Gerard Buxton Sports Ground, Royal Wootton Bassett

### **Attendance:**

Ashton Keynes, Calne, Chiseldon, David Lloyd, Lechlade, Marlborough, Minety, PAKT, Pewsey, Purton, Ramsbury, Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon, Uffington

### **Non-attendance without apology:**

Aldbourne, Burbage, Chippenham, CS & Nalgo, Defence Academy, Devizes, Down Ampney, Fairford, Faringdon, Highworth, Wanborough

### **1. Apologies**

Andy Dickinson (Committee), Bill Wells (Great Bedwyn), Steve Williams (Nationwide), Matthew Morgan (Delta)

### **2. 2023 Minutes**

Minutes were shared with the AGM Agenda - no matters arising.

*Accepted: Liz Lewis (RWB)*

*Seconded: Greg Buckle (Ashton Keynes)*

### **3. Chair's Report**

No formal report as Nick Hewens is new in the role. Nick's first report will be in 2025.

### **4. League Report**

- Jackie Wood presented her report (attached to these minutes).
- Nick thanked all clubs for their patience coping with the protracted LTA software migration, and gave special thanks to Jackie Wood and Andy Dickinson for an amazing job before, during and after the migration.
- Calne still has a problem with their contact details on the LTA site, but this is outside of SDTL's control and Calne should pursue this with the LTA directly.
- Steve May (Pewsey) suggested a 2-way announcement so that any Unknown Player fixes are communicated between clubs - this is not in SDTL's control using the software as there is no 'comments' box for the Away team.



- There was a discussion about individual vs club mailbox email addresses; Jackie confirmed that contact details on LTA were individual email addresses but that club-level addresses were usually owned by an individual rather than a shared mailbox.
- **Action:** Jackie Wood reminded clubs that there are [FAQs](#) on the [SDTL website](#) and will send an email to clubs to remind them.

## 5. Treasurer's Report

- Lindsey Hall shared copies of her report with attendees and discussed the key points (see attached).
- £290 is to be spent on planting trees in the [Tree-Nation SDTL Forest](#) to offset carbon emissions for the past year (ref Agenda item 11). A link to the Tree-Nation initiative and our net zero commitment is also at the bottom right of the [SDTL website](#) home page.
- Penny Smith (Marlborough) asked whether charging fines would continue and suggested incentivising clubs instead. Jackie Wood confirmed that fines were reintroduced due to clubs not completing mandatory tasks by the deadlines in the League Rules, creating extra work for admins; but that proposals for changes should be submitted in advance of the AGM (as mentioned in the AGM Notice sent to club contacts every year). Nick Hewens (Chair) added that the Committee needs help to raise new ideas and is open to change, but that the valuable time of Committee Members also needs to be protected, and that a few clubs are creating the problem hence the 'stick rather than carrot' approach deemed necessary at the current time.
- Janet Saunders (Purton) suggested that results could be entered 'live' at the end of a match using mobile phones which would surely be feasible. The group discussed this but some clubs adopt different approaches (e.g. a central admin for all match results) so this may not work for some clubs although it is possible now for those who want to enter results this way.

*Accepted: Derek Warnett (Calne)*

*Seconded: Jake Miles (Minety)*



**6. Election of Officers**

Nick Hewens shared the good news that Sam Pugh (Swindon Tennis Club) has kindly volunteered to replace Lucie Barrass as League Secretary, as Lucie is emigrating in 2025, and the Committee gladly accepted Sam's offer. Lucie will hand over responsibilities and related admin access before the next Committee meeting (3rd March 2025) and will attend that meeting with Sam. All other Committee members will remain in post.

*Proposed: Steve May (Pewsey)*

*Seconded: Janet Warnett (Calne)*

**7. Life Member nominations**

None nominated

**8. Presentation Evening**

Alan Hunt (Committee) provided an update on the upcoming Presentation Evening on Saturday 23rd November at David Lloyd. There are currently 90 people attending, with a cap of 100. Nick Hewens thanked Alan for all the hard work organising the event and wished everyone a good evening.

**9. Entry fees and Fines**

**Action:** Lucie to remove the words 'Club Deposits' from this item in the next AGM Agenda as this is not relevant. No other changes or updates (refer to League Report in item 4 above, attached to these Minutes).

**10. Funding and Donations**

Lindsey Hall (Committee) proposed a donation of £200 to the Wiltshire Junior Tennis Programme. Seconded by Gay Oliver (Lechlade).

**Action:** Lindsey to make the donation.

**11. Offsetting of Emissions**

See information about Tree-Nation in point 5 above. £290 will be spent on tree planting in the Tree-Nation SDTL Forest to offset carbon emissions for the past year.

**Action:** Andy Dickinson to purchase.



**12. Proposed rule changes submitted by the Committee**

Nick asked whether all present had reviewed the marked up document shared with the Agenda - all confirmed they had read the document in advance. Nick then highlighted some of the proposed changes and invited discussion:

(a) Regarding the current approach of a tied rubber and the pressure from the LTA to create a win/lose result:

- The Committee agreed to keep the current format otherwise there was a risk of match lengths being extended.
- Nick Bent (Lechlade) asked why the LTA pushed for this - Alan Hunt responded that due to the World Tennis Number (WTN) applied at an individual level, they wanted to have a win/lose result rather than a tie. Alan asked for further discussion to be saved for the AOB section.
- RWB asked whether the Fast-4 format had been considered - to be discussed in AOB.

(b) Regarding standardising tennis balls further, potentially to Babolat brand only:

- Nick mentioned that there was a complaint about one club using non-standard (pressureless) balls which had caused physical discomfort. The Committee had discussed whether one standard ball across the league would be beneficial from both a cost and a level playing field perspective, and were in discussion with Babolat re a discounted sponsorship rate if the balls could be tested first and recommendations given.
- Marlborough: asked how clubs would get the balls - the intention is to buy them online at club level using a discount code.
- RWB (Liz Lewis): club captains should receive info from Wiltshire County re balls which we want to be extended to SDTL.
- Ashton Keynes (Greg Buckle): mentioned that his club may be the one complained about as they use ITF-approved Tretorn pressureless balls. The rationale for this is that the balls last longer because they hold their bounce, with the longevity of the ball meaning a lower cost to the club and less of an environmental impact; although they realise that some players like them and some don't. Lucie added that she injured her elbow playing with Tretorn as they were so heavy. Greg said that AK wanted to continue using these balls.



## SWINDON & DISTRICT TENNIS LEAGUE

- Nick Hewens on behalf of the Committee strongly encouraged use of standard pressured balls such as Babolat; Greg said he would make the case to the club.
- PAKT (Peter Cejer) said that PAKT would go with the majority decision.
- Calne (Derek Warnett) was encouraged by a standard, but not by Babolat (or any one brand). The league should not dictate a single supplier which could be more expensive and Calne would not agree to this if it was mandatory, but would agree to an 'LTA Standard ball' recommendation.
- Ramsbury (Cameron Fraser) said that as Ramsbury plays on clay, the club uses Babolat clay balls; the surface played on would need to be taken into consideration when making a decision.
- Nick Hewens said that the proposals were not finalised yet and will be brought back to the table; and that no firm recommendation will be made until at least 2025. Nick asked Ashton Keynes to consider the comments of other clubs re pressureless balls, and thanked all present for their valuable input.

(c) Nick read out the proposed change to Rule 6h:

- Ashton Keynes: fine with principle but how is 10-day period split? Is it 72 hours plus 7 days as the match result must be completed within 10 days (Rule 8c)?
- **Action:** Proposer (Andy Dickinson) to provide clearer wording for Rule 6h to explain the 10-day window and each teams' deadlines within those 10 days, e.g. 3-7-3 (or 3-5-5, suggested by Nick Bent from Lechlade).

(d) The LTA have standardised terminology, changing from 'Club' to 'Venue':

- Liz Lewis (RWB) said eventually all clubs will be classed as 'Venues'.
- Gay Oliver (Lechlade) raised the fact that Swindon and PAKT played at one venue; Nick responded that PAKT comes under Swindon so 'Venue' would still apply in this case, and said that the terminology is out of SDTL's control as it was an LTA decision.

*Proposed by: Nick Hewens (Chair, Committee)*

*Vote to accept proposed changes: 20 for, none against, remainder abstained*

*Accepted: Joe Murphy (Swindon)*

*Seconded: Greg Buckle (Ashton Keynes)*



### 13. Proposed rule changes submitted by Clubs

- (a) Calne had proposed a change to Rule 4c, which was outlined in the Agenda. Janet Warnett described the scenario and proposes the removal of the rule as it is inflexible. It does not affect playing up or down - it just means that players can play more than once in a given week which allows matches to be completed as smaller clubs can field players.
- Ashton Keynes clarified that this would only affect winter league matches, as there are set days for summer matches.
  - Purton (Janet Saunders) said this was not a bad idea as everyone wanted to get matches played.
  - Marlborough (Penny Smith) said that clubs could play the fixture but forfeit the points for the 'ineligible' players; but that the club would have to declare the forfeit and would they do this? How would it be governed?
  - RWB (Liz Lewis) suggested that the club forfeits just the points for the second appearance of the player (when playing more than the maximum rubbers allowed in a week).
  - Pewsey (Steve May) commented that for instance, an 'A' team player could play for the 'B' team more often early in the season and this would be unfair.
  - Lindsey Hall (Committee) thought it may be used tactically at the end of the season.
  - Purton (Janet Saunders) suggested there would be a 6-0, 6-0 result, or the match conceded.
  - **Decision:** Calne withdrew the proposal.

### 14. AOB

- (a) Nick Hewens raised the fact that David Lloyd have temporary issues with lights and outdoor court surfaces, rendering evening matches impossible in the short to medium term. David Lloyd would like to play home matches indoors for Winter 24/25 only until the issues have been resolved, which is outside of David Lloyd Swindon's control as it is managed centrally. The Committee was happy to accept this proposal on Health & Safety grounds but asked for comments:
- RWB: DL had already swapped a 'home' for an 'away' fixture which RWB agreed to, but RWB are happy to play indoors.



## SWINDON & DISTRICT TENNIS LEAGUE

- Lechlade (Gay Oliver): DL have postponed a match so need to honour that as there are now no players available on the original date.
- Pewsey (Steve May): Suggested that DL play each of their matches 'Away' if requested by the opponent.
- Calne: commented that they don't play against DL as different division, but if they did, they would not agree as the indoor surface only used by DL members gives DL a substantial advantage.
- Marlborough (Penny Smith): commented that clubs should make individual decisions, but that DL should play their home matches 'away' if an indoor court bothers opponents.

**Proposal:** Leave decision to affected clubs to agree either to play indoors or for DL to travel 'away' otherwise. DL can offer the option to play indoors, but cannot insist on playing the match at home.

**Vote:** 22 for; rest abstained

**Proposal approved**

- (b) Lindsey Hall (Treasurer) reminded all present that there would be a £50 fine for any club that has won a trophy and is not at the Presentation Evening to collect it; for instance Uffington, who won Winter Division 5. Jackie Wood explained the rationale for the fine amount (equal to two tickets). Uffington will let the Club Captain know as they weren't aware of the results. Jackie reiterated that all results are published on the SDTL website.
- (c) Purton (Janet Saunders) suggested using a local Wiltshire company called Price Balls as their balls are manufactured in the UK. Calne said they tried these balls but cannot use them as they are not LTA-certified.  
**Action:** Andy Dickinson to find out whether these balls are ITF-approved.
- (d) Marlborough (Penny Smith): suggested playing in Fast-4 format instead of the current format.  
**Action:** Committee to discuss and then send out a survey asking clubs' opinions on different formats including having shorter match times. Suggestions included Fast-4, 3 pairs, fewer teams in more divisions, etc.



## SWINDON & DISTRICT TENNIS LEAGUE

Nick Hewens thanked the Committee for their work and thanked clubs present for their attendance at the AGM.

The AGM closed at 20:57.