

Tonbridge Sports Association

Annual Report 2006/2007

The year under review has been one of the weather taking a prominent role in the playing of outdoor sport. As usual the winter season started with such enthusiasm, in September, only to be frustrated as early as December.

We are very grateful to TMBC Leisure Services for carrying out the required work on the extension to Deaconsfield. This enabled the planned reorganisation of the rugby pitches giving the Club the ability to have its mini rugby close to the Pavilion, much more appropriate for the children. This movement of rugby provided us with two more much needed junior football pitches on the main Racecourse Sportsground.

Unfortunately both the mini rugby and new junior football pitches are in such positions as to be considerably affected by the wet winter we have had. The Racecourse was not alone as Farm, Swanmead and Frogsbridge sportsgrounds have all suffered badly. We do realise that Tonbridge is an area that will always have a problem with the level of the water table. Even so, many Clubs find it difficult to accept the cancellation of their game week after week.

It is recognised, by our Clubs, that Tonbridge has some of the best pitches in this part of Kent. It is therefore important to assess that we have the right balance of pitch use and pitch preservation. The adverse weather conditions have not hampered our Clubs that use the water in and around Tonbridge. Our Sailing, Canoe, Angling and Triathlon Clubs continue to be active.

Little is said of Clubs that use indoor facilities. We have a very active Badminton Club, at the Angel Centre, which prospers by reason of the energetic approach to the junior section. There has also been continuing success in the Swimming Club. One of the reasons for this is the coaching and this has been recognised by awarding the Coach of the Year award to Darren Leech

This year the Coach of the Year Award committee discussed the number of good coaches, and managers, who have been volunteering their services for a considerable number of years. To allow us to reward these it was suggested that we can also recommend a Lifetime Achievement Award. For 2007 this has been awarded to one of the Tonbridge Sports Associations executive members, Margaret Borley. Margaret has promoted the sport of Baseball, for many years, and indeed three of the Clubs members represented Great Britain, in Italy, last year.

It has been pleasing to see that juniors are enjoying the golf at Poulton Wood. In the sports of cricket, tennis and athletics we have considerable activity every week, throughout the year, in coaching and competitions. It is important for all those involved in sport to recognise that the encouragement of junior sections in Clubs is for the longer term benefit.

These points were the core of the special subject at the November 2006 Tonbridge Forum. The TSA was asked, by TMBC, to make a presentation on "Sport in Tonbridge – The Next Five Years". We concentrated on the three sports of Football, Cricket and Rugby. We believe we brought to the audience a comprehensive summary of what is needed to maintain an active Club and the issues facing us. We also brought out the important issue of the comparative lack of physical education and sporting interest shown in some schools. The extent of popularity of our Clubs is an indication that a considerable number of children are still enthusiastic towards the playing of sport.

The membership of our Clubs is approximately 6500 and the facilities required are extensive. Our winter season sports clubs not only need good and reliable pitches but also need mid week coaching and training facilities. We therefore continue to support, and continue to pursue, the creation and use of all weather facilities.

Such facilities require a large capital investment, including floodlights, and need more than ten hours use per day for viability. Partnership with Schools can provide this use. Use outside of school hours is beneficial to the schools as it provides income to maintain the facility. This is then beneficial, to the community, as it provides facilities which cannot be found elsewhere. The continuing problem is that schools, partly by disposing of land, have residential properties close to their borders. Being considerate to those residents has meant that opportunities for all weather facilities, with the needed floodlights, are becoming very hard to create.

Our report cannot be complete without mentioning two names involved in sport. Peter Wright, who had been Director of Leisure Services, at TMBC, retired in December. His leadership and forward thinking has provided a wealth of facilities to sports users in the Borough. His concept of building for the future, in partnership with Clubs and Schools, has enabled a number of ventures to come to fruition.

Last year we mentioned the name of Dave Arnold, in respect of him receiving a well deserved award, and we now record his sudden passing away. He was a TSA Liaison Officer and also represented the sport of Athletics for many years. He was a thoughtful quiet speaker who commanded respect when voicing his opinions at our meetings.

It is pleasing to end another year seeing, once again, improving facilities. Our Bowls Club, on the Racecourse, has commenced its long overdue improvements. The first phase of improvements at Swanmead now has funding, upgrading of facilities at Tonbridge Farm has been approved and work at Poult Wood is in hand.

The end of our presentation, at the Tonbridge Forum was that TSA members are successful because, in the Tonbridge area, all the bodies are working together for the common cause. The Clubs do not rest on their laurels and we believe the Tonbridge community is the winner.

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