

Tonbridge Sports Association

Annual Report 2007/2008

Sport continues to play an important role in the Tonbridge community. It is through the interplay of enthusiastic volunteers, in organised clubs, using the good facilities provided, that success follows.

It is first worth drawing attention to the background information that emanates from those applying for the Sporting Excellence Grants, in the Tonbridge area. In their sports they are "England and Great Britain player" and "Ranked in National top 10" and "Selected for U16 National Squad" and "Ranked 2nd in Britain" and "England Trialist". These individual successes are achieved from many hours of dedicated training and, of course, assistance and guidance from experienced coaches.

TMBC attempts to recognise the impact that coaches have by presenting a Sports Coach of the Year Award and now an annual Lifetime Achievement Award. This year's awards are no exception with the Lifetime award going to Mike Rowbottom of Tonbridge Athletics Club. Mike has been involved in athletics for almost sixty years and continues to provide his experience to young athletes. It gives us great pleasure to mention that one of our TSA members, Margaret Borley, received an MBE in November for her services to the sport of Baseball.

With these participants one can see why Tonbridge has an excellent structure of sports clubs which continue to enjoy success. They not only have success in their leagues, and trophy matches against other clubs, but also success in growing stronger as clubs. A number of clubs have achieved a recognised level for their management, organisation and commitment to development through junior sections. It is pleasing to have the pressures and demands from clubs fuelled by these achievements.

We have these pressures coming through in a number of ways. The facilities, in Tonbridge, overlap between winter and summer. The winter season clubs are getting ready weeks and weeks before the season starts and then, because of weather conditions and success in competitions, need extra weeks in which to complete their fixtures. This places a strain on the maintenance and preparation work that coincides with other special events.

There is the pressure on having more facilities. We cannot create any more playing surfaces for winter sport and have looked to consecutive use where possible. The training facilities need to be available in all weather conditions and in the evenings. We have been in a number of discussions concerning the urgent need for synthetic all weather pitches in our area. We have the situation of Tonbridge clubs going outside of the Borough to train in the evenings.

Such facilities have a high capital cost and therefore the usage needs to also be high. The answer has been seen as requiring some form of partnership with schools which

would then provide both the day time and evening use. We have continually been restrained by the sports areas, in schools, being in close proximity to neighbouring houses. It is understandable why the planning issues therefore restrict the floodlighting aspect. Floodlights are a basic requirement in order for there to be community use. We must continue in the search and it is very pleasing to note that TMBC are committed to discussing financial joint ventures in order to create these further facilities.

There is the pressure of improving the existing facilities. The ongoing need for improvements to the golf course are recognised and the irrigation system work will commence this year. We are continually in discussion on the quality of the sportsgrounds and the maintenance programme does respond. The sport of cricket does now require a playing surface above the level that may have been acceptable years ago. The sharing of the responsibilities, between TMBC and the clubs, will hopefully bring about the required improvements.

The TSA supports the structured approach rather than ad hoc discussions and decisions. We recognise the importance of the Playing Pitch Strategy, the Open Plan Strategy and the Management Plans for particular facilities. We consider that the six weekly Liaison meetings between the TSA and the officers of Leisure Services to be invaluable in setting down the action plans relating to such a wide variety of sports. It is also good that sports development has a part in the Liaison process.

We are once again pleased to report an increasing participation, in our sports, of children from an early age. The mini soccer on Saturday mornings and the mini rugby on Sunday mornings have numbers in their hundreds. The junior sections at Poulton Wood, at the Athletics Club, at the Tennis Club, at the Badminton Club and at the Swimming Club are extremely encouraging for the future. Cowdrey Cricket Club has a thriving junior section being fed by over 200 children attending the TMBC winter coaching programme.

The sports activities, in Tonbridge, attract participants from every age group. We have already mentioned the numbers of youngsters that train and play in the junior teams. The clubs, and facilities, also cater through to the retirement years. The Angling Society has organised the purchase of a lake to enhance the facilities on offer and the Riverside Bowls Club continues its necessary improvements to the Clubhouse.

In order to maintain and improve the provision of sporting activities in Tonbridge we need to continually discuss and plan for the future. At the TSA Liaison meeting on the 2nd April we discussed thirty five items on a wide variety of sporting activities from our rolling agenda. Not all issues are easily dealt with and some items take time but are never removed until completed.

The important issue is that the TSA, like its member clubs, are committed to moving forward to facilitate greater participation in sport.

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