

## **Tonbridge Sports Association Annual Report 2008/2009**

As part of the process of preparing the Annual Report it is helpful to look back at the minutes of each of the TMBC/TSA Liaison meetings. These six weekly meetings are held between the Chairman of the TSA and the Leisure Services officers. Being able to sit down and discuss sports activities directly with the persons responsible for Sports Development, Administration, Facilities Management and overall Leisure Services has considerable advantages.

To have a structure where we have a rolling agenda, minutes and action points means that follow up is achieved and progress, although sometimes slow, is made. The items that take some time often involve persons outside of our meeting and also involve liaison with specific clubs. That progress is continually made is an indication of the enthusiasm that all concerned have in improving sporting activity in Tonbridge.

It is that enthusiasm that has enabled the area of Sports Development to continue. There is continued success in the winter junior cricket coaching and the current sessions have had more children than previous years. Time has also been spent assisting one of our Squash clubs in promoting their sport with particular reference to the junior section. Our Judo club in Tonbridge goes from strength to strength and thrives on the enthusiasm of the leaders. A number of Club's run Open Days, Taster Sessions and Coaching all with the idea of promoting their sport and their Club.

The Sports Development Officer has given help to a number of Club's who wish to achieve greater Club status. We now have Club links to the Sports Directory on the TMBC website and over time this will help clubs reach out to more people in the community. Hopefully this will also be achieved by staging the Sports Fair at Tonbridge School on 26<sup>th</sup> April. At that event there will be recognition of the enthusiasm of volunteer coaches by presenting the Sports Coach of the Year to Boxing and a Lifetime Achievement Award to Tennis.

We not only have to have enthusiasm in organising sports development but also some enthusiasm in improving the facilities that our clubs use. This past year has seen improvements to the Poulton Wood Golf course, the purchase of another lake by the Angling Society, a better clubhouse and facilities for the Riverside Bowls Club and improvements at Tonbridge Farm. Discussions have already been held for improvements to the Swanmead building and the Woodland Walk building.

The All weather facility at Tonbridge Farm has suffered greatly in past years. A considerable amount of money was allocated by TMBC to the improvement of the base and the surface only to have the inevitable flooding within months. The new surface survived and was back in use within days. Considering the economic environment these last nine months the TSA is pleased to see that TMBC's enthusiasm for improving facilities did not stall.

During this past year the TSA's presentations to the Leisure and Arts Advisory Board and the Tonbridge Forum have brought out the continuing need for additional All Weather training facilities for our member clubs. It was clear, at an early stage, that some form of partnership with a school was the only financial way forward. Through

the TMBC/TSA Liaison meetings the strategy evolved and a process of following up every avenue that emerged was agreed. All that was needed was the enthusiasm of all involved.

It has taken a great deal of time by all concerned to pursue the ideas. We have followed up and discussed eight possibilities. Each of these involved telephone calls, correspondence, site meetings and discussions. For one reason or another each of these have not progressed. However number nine has progressed and by the end of the year we hope there will be a 100m by 60m All Weather facility, with floodlights, available for club use. The facility is at Tonbridge School and has been brought about by a substantial financial commitment by TMBC. The work should start in the summer and the use will be predominately junior sport. Knowing the time spent so far this really will be an achievement.

Not all issues that have occurred in the last year have been good news items. The changes to the cost of car parking have affected a number of member clubs. Charges were introduced at Haysden Country Park, a facility that has had free parking since its inception. Car Parks used by clubs on the Racecourse Sportsground are affected by the car parks also being in close proximity to the High Street. They therefore are viewed as being within the shopping zones rather than being there for the users of the sportsground.

A number of meetings were held so that each individual club at Haysden could put forward issues that affected them specifically. Two meetings were held with the Planning and Car Park officers to address matters affecting the Sportsground users. All the issues were solved, as far as possible, and although not as before Clubs accept that they have to exist within the community environment. The withdrawal of Grants, by TMBC, for 2009/2010 will affect a number of Clubs and it is hoped these will be reinstated next year.

It is important that people have some enthusiasm to spend time in discussion. As a product of the Management Plans for the Racecourse Sportsground and Tonbridge Farm we will have User Panels. The first for Tonbridge Farm has already been held and it was noticeable that the items discussed showed why User Panels can be effective.

This annual report tends to look back at the last year but our member clubs continue to look forward. Football Clubs have already activated the Respect Campaign and a number of clubs are seeking status awards from the sports authorities. This will enable them to be sounder in their organisation and be a greater asset within the community. As we look forward to the next three years of build up to the Olympics it is hoped that those not currently participating in sport will see the opportunities available. They will certainly see the enthusiasm that is inherent in the clubs and become aware of the considerable facilities that have been made available in Tonbridge.