

Tonbridge Sports Association**Annual report 2012/2013**

Once again the year under review has seen the Association being involved in improving the provision of sports facilities to Tonbridge and its surrounding areas. As the representative body, of all the sports clubs, we see no decrease in demand for organised sport and in some sports, increased demand. This has partly occurred by reason of us all enjoying the UK staging of the Olympic Games and the success of Team GB.

To see the Olympic Games legacy, in sports activity, may take quite a number of years. The Olympics can be viewed as the pinnacle of a wider concept to make the participation in sport, with the benefit it offers to health and the community, a natural and bigger part of our lives.

What happened to Team GB did not come by chance or luck. It came from many many hours of training assisted by dedicated coaches who work hard with the elite sportsmen and women for a considerable number of years. This dedication, to the elite, not only relates to sports contained in the Olympic Games but all sports where there is national and international competition.

The elite are the 1 in a 100 who emanate from sports clubs around the country. It is for our member clubs to create the 100 and then to create the enthusiasm for sports people to just get better and then to excel. Our member clubs are there to give an outlet to those children whose participation in school physical activity is restricted by the reduction in school playing fields and the pressure of academic subjects on the school timetable.

The Government has recently published an Olympic Legacy plan which, to some extent, relies on the support of community sports clubs. The Tonbridge Sports Association, working in partnership with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, provides the environment that can be enjoyed by the sports clubs. We also rely on schools to make available their indoor and outdoor facilities, in the evenings, at an acceptable cost. Our clubs, in turn, rely on volunteers to survive, be they parents or past playing members. This enables the clubs to keep subscription levels to the absolute minimum and make sport available to as many as possible in the community.

In Tonbridge, and the surrounding areas, the facilities are extremely good. Not only do our clubs enjoy the extent of outdoor sports space but also have conditions that receive compliments from visiting teams. When the Sports Association's members recently discussed the review of the Grounds Maintenance contract the emphasis was on maintaining the existing condition of the grounds. The facilities, available in the town, were so good that the visiting Australian Athletics team were pleased to use them as their base.

That is not to say that we should be content but should always review and we have recently agreed a programme of football pitch remedial work. It is appreciated that maintaining the good conditions is not always easy with the water table level across the area. The impact of water, in areas at the Racecourse Sportsground, is now worse than ever with ground subsidence the result. The length of the winter season continues to impose upon the summer season and the Football Leagues think that no other sports need the grounds or that the players play any summer sport.

We have seen both indoor and outdoor sports clubs recording success in their competitive encounters. Our local newspaper continually records the successes of the Judo Club and their members see future Olympic participation as an achievable goal. Our other indoor clubs continue to move forward on a steady road to building future sustainable clubs. It is pleasing to note that the planning for the new Angel Leisure Centre will see the sports provision become available in the new building prior to the cessation in the old building.

Our outdoor sports facilities, and clubs, are the greater part of our membership. Currently the Tonbridge Sports Association is party to discussions concerning an enhancement to cricket. The merging of some cricket facilities could lead to extra wickets and a centre of excellence, in the town. However this is dependent on clubs looking to the future rather than the past.

One of the noticeable results arising from the Olympic Games is the number of children interested in athletics. The strength of Tonbridge Athletics Club, and its facilities, means they can accept the increased numbers of members but have to provide increased numbers of coaches and administrators to run an effective club. Football has always been, and still is, extremely popular and mini soccer encourages children from an early age. This is now the same for Rugby where the number wanting to participate continues to grow.

We should not forget that our Country Park is home to a number of sports clubs. The Sports Association is always in conversation to improve facilities and currently we are in conversation to improve facilities for the Angling club. Finally our Golf Club and Squash Club members will soon enjoy much improved changing facilities at Poulton Wood to compliment the quality of the course.

Each Tonbridge Sports Association annual report records the Tonbridge & Malling coaching awards. This year the Sports Coach Award went to Gary Marshall of Cowdrey Cricket Club and the Lifetime Achievement Award went to Tony Mulcuck of Ditten Bowls Club. Both well deserved and the awards were presented by the Deputy Mayor at events involving the winners. The Tonbridge Sports Association is pleased to see that the awards, which have now been combined into the Courier Sports Awards, will be the same as the existing Tonbridge & Malling Awards.

This Annual Report records the passing away of two influential officers of the Sports Association. Alf Hams was a long term supporter of sport, in Tonbridge, being involved in swimming to begin with. His work, in various positions in the Association, culminated in him becoming Chairman in 1987 and, in that post, brought a different perspective to the Associations work. The formal position, of the past, was replaced by liaison, dialogue and working very much in partnership with the member clubs and in particular Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. He contributed greatly to the planning for Tonbridge Swimming Pool and the development of Tonbridge Farm Sportsground, Poulton Wood Golf Course and the joint venture to create Tonbridge Athletics track. Alf set down a practical way of the Association fulfilling its remit, which continues to this day.

Barbara Bentall became the minutes secretary of the Tonbridge Sports Association, in 1979, at a time when the role of the Association was expanding. Barbara later became Secretary and in her whole period of office, which lasted over 25 years, contributed her time to assisting the Chairmen cope with the increasing sports facilities and the increasing sports participation in and around the town. Barbara's main sport was playing for Tonbridge Ladies Hockey Club and those attending her memorial service included a number of ladies who played hockey with Barbara, on the Racecourse Sportsground pitches. This illustrates another dimension of community sports clubs in that they have a social as well as a sporting environment.

Many clubs, using the sportsgrounds, began their existence as the Sports and Social sections of local companies. They may have since amalgamated, and changed their name, but the principals of why they were formed remain. This is now seen, each week, in the form of hundreds of children taking part in organised sport provided by our member clubs. Starting at this grass roots level the hundreds are encouraged by the club coaches and it maybe that 1 in a 100 will progress and excel and once again we will be referring to an Olympic medal winner, or the winner of an international event, as starting their sporting career in Tonbridge.

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