

Avon and Badsquash AGM minutes

Monday, 11th May at 7pm at David Lloyd WOT

Apologies for absence

Thanks to those who let us know they couldn't make it this year but in general turn-out was low this year which is a shame because we had a lot on the agenda that affects squash in our area and therefore *you*. If you don't attend, you don't get to hear the detail and discussion around the decisions we make and you don't have a say.

It was also disappointing that when we gave all the trophies out there were very few of the winning teams there to receive them.

We all love to play, we should all want to be involved in the future of the game.

Matters arising and approval of 2014 AGM minutes

Last year's minutes were approved. There were no matters arising.

Treasurer's report

Olly went through the finances and they were accepted. Copies of the full accounts showing where the income came from and what was spent on what were handed out to all AGM attendees but here's a very high level summary:

'Avon & BAD Squash & Racketball Accounts' for 1st May 2014 to 30th April 2015.

- £3,823.75 (IN)
- £3,313.33 (OUT)
- £11,091.59 (OVERALL TOTAL IN THE BANK)

County events update

Nick went over the county events. In general Avon is very well represented in the county events around the region and fairs well. Unfortunately the information is not well published on the ESR website so it was quite a job finding out what had happened over the last year.

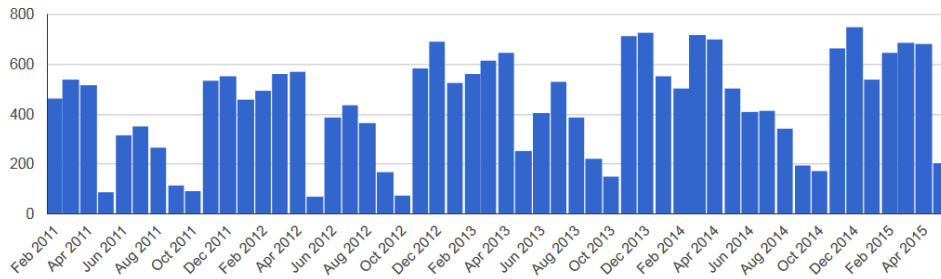
If we can get the results into a form we can post, we'll put something on the website.

Junior development update

Richard King wasn't able to attend in person but gave a full report which is appended to these minutes. Please scroll down to find them.

League participation summary

We have a page on the website that shows how many players are playing league and club boxes (for those running boxes on the system). Try **Home->Participation**.



We currently around 700 players - same as last year and generally up on the years before. We were running at 550 players back in 2011. We are increasing rather than decreasing which is good.

Unfortunately, we are losing courts rather than gaining them and this is having a knock-on effect to generating the fixtures which is getting harder and harder. More on that later.

Data is available for individual clubs too. Same page on the website – just scroll down to find your club.

ESR update

Squash in England is considered a ‘failing sport’ along with Tennis, Fencing and others. There are currently 7 failing sports in England.

This is measured by Sport England based on two key areas:

1. **Elite success** – we’re currently doing well with a number of English players in the top ten of the world but there’s concern for the future as there aren’t many younger players or juniors coming through in the top ranks.
2. **Player participation** – which is currently decreasing at around 10%/year. This is measured through six-monthly surveys so it’s somewhat approximate. The trend is clear though.

The drop in participation is a serious issue and is the reason that Squash is being considered to be failing and, as a result, ESR have had their funding cut by about 30%. As you can imagine this has necessitated a complete shake-up of the ESR as an organisation.

They have reduced from 60 to 30 staff and hired a new CEO (Keir Worth). It’s a massive and difficult change for them and they’re really just setting down after working through it.

Having said this, it has caused a realisation that they needed to change and they have a new approach. The plan is to focus on participation and work with counties more closely. In the past they’ve been somewhat aloof, not given us much support and passed things down that they had come up with. Now they are opening up communication channels so the counties have more say and can have their opinions listened to.

It’s also important that the counties take advantage of this and get more involved. The counties don’t talk to each other much but they could be comparing notes, sharing best practice and supporting each other too. It’s definitely a new era and we need to take advantage of it.

If you’re interested in looking beyond our own back yard, do get in touch.

ESR membership

The question gets raised from time to time about whether we need to be members of ESR and the answer is – yes we do. All players who play league and any of the open/closed tournaments should be members and they should all have an ESR number. In most cases, player membership comes via club membership and, yes, all our clubs should be members too.

So far we've not enforced this but many counties do – i.e. you can't play league squash in those counties unless you are a member of ESR and this is enforced by their league system.

There was some discussion from Kingsdown about whether they needed to pay the ESR fees and whether they could get any help with the £260 costs for public liability – which is about the same as the ESR membership for the club.

We took the action to find out if ESR could help with the insurance and what they said was that they're looking in to this but don't having anything yet. They won't be able to include the insurance as part of the membership without a big hike in the membership costs but they do recommend trying Perkins Slade. Their account manager is Amanda Wynne-Jones on 0121 698 8033 / 07977 432 663. General contact details are: Tricorn House, 51-53 Hagley Rd, Birmingham B16 8TP, 0121 698 8000. Email info@perkins-slade.com. Worth a go to see if they can do better than your current quote.

That led to the usual question about the value of ESR membership and a re-hash of the discussion we had three years ago when we voted to merge Avon Squash and Bristol and District Squash. There are some specific things that ESR does that help the county:

- They help fund the junior coaching
- They support the coaches
- They support the running of events and tournaments
- They run the inter-counties that we take part in
- They have provided money to help support some clubs

They are also working at the national level on:

- Participation programs like the Big Hit
- Getting more squash on TV
- Supporting the Olympic bid
- Improved IT so the various systems around are all joined up

Did you know that membership of ESR gets you £15 off the price of SquashTV? That's probably the most useful discount available.

We need to treat ESR a bit like the NHS. We all pay into it but we don't necessarily gain from it as individuals. ESR are doing their best (finally...) to stop the decline of our sport in this country and the membership we pay is supporting that – along with the grants from Sport England.

Promoting clubs; hosting tournaments, club events, speakers, exhibitions etc.

Mike Harris had some ideas around what could be done to boost squash in our region which lead to some other ideas and discussion:

- On offer – a 6 week coaching course at your club. Half price coaching after that in the hope that will sustain a coaching group. You just have to ask.
- Different clubs could host the county championships. Need 4 courts. This big events don't always have to be run at Redland or Vivo. It's a great advert for your club and good revenue from the bar as well.
- Go into schools with coaches. Do min-squash. Get the youngsters hooked!
- Quite a few schools in the city with squash programs but they don't have any matches to play. We could have an inter-schools league. Nick/Mike to ask Rich King to see what we can do.
- Compare with what Kent do – they have a monthly tournament for juniors that are run as boxes and all played on one day. Best of three. Winners go up for next month, losers go down – same as regular boxes.
- Maybe run a separate cup event. One team per club. 3 players per team. One female. All done on one night. Could be an end of season event.
- Maybe make something more of the play-offs. That's also an end of season event.
- If you have any ideas or suggestions please get in touch.

Election of officers

The four existing (remaining) positions were opened up to anyone else who would like to help run squash in our area. After the usual looking at the floor it was agreed that the current incumbents would continue in their roles:

- Chairman – Nick Drysdale. Our county rep to ESR.
- Finances – Olly Morrall
- League secretary (mixed) – Richard Bickers
- League secretary (ladies) – Pippa Green

Do remember that these roles are voluntary and on top of everything else we are trying to do. It's always nice to be offered help – be a contributor, not just a consumer!

Division structure of the BAD mixed league

For a long time now, the mixed leagues have been organised as pairs or even triplets of equal divisions so, for example, the standard of teams in 2A was about the same as that of the teams in 2C. The reasoning being:

- There are a lot of players of about the same standard in the middle order
- Promotion/relegation of teams is faster so a team gets to the most appropriate division more quickly

However, now we have team levels added to the tables and also looking at the results it has become apparent that the teams have a wider range of standards than we thought – or used to have. It turns out that the top teams are actually quite a bit stronger than the lower teams in most of the divisions causing a lot of the matches to be somewhat one-sided.

So from next season we're going to revert back to single 'column' of divisions with the Premier A-C at the top followed by divisions 1 through 9. This will:

- Allow the better teams to play each other and have closer matches
- Be a whole lot simpler to understand and manage!

To ensure that teams can still get to their appropriate division quickly:

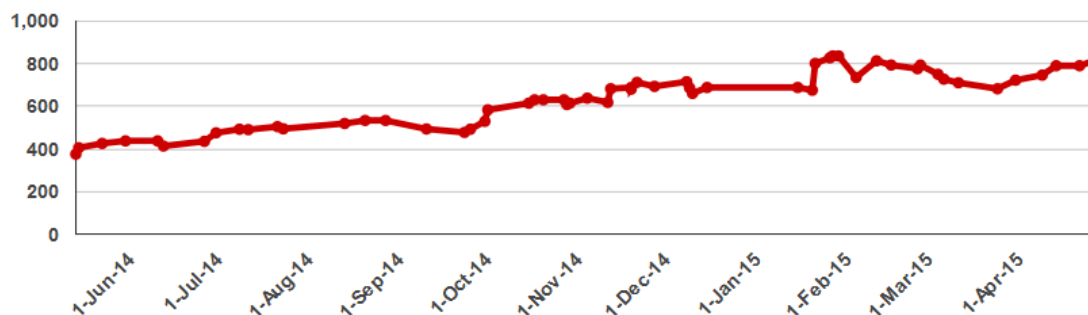
- The winning team for each division will go up two divisions
- The second placed team for each division will go up one division
- The same applies for the bottom two teams – going down
- This will not apply to the Premiere divisions as it's still too big a leap to go from Prem C to Prem A.
- There will be a transition from the current structure to the new one for next season and there may be some 'settling' to work out.
- As it's not the same movement for every division, here are the other cases that we'll be using:
 - Bottom 2 teams of Prem A swap with the top 2 teams of Prem B
 - Bottom 2 teams of Prem B swap with the top 2 teams of Prem C
 - Teams 4 and 5 of Prem C swap with the top 2 of Div 1
 - Bottom team of Prem C swap with the top team of Div 2
 - Second team of Div 2 swaps with team 5 of Div 1
 - Top three teams of lowest division swap with the bottom two teams of the division above and the bottom team of the division above that one.
- It's easier with a picture! We'll see if we can add something clearer to the rules!

Special presentation

In memory of Jeremy Burns, Player of the year 2014, a special award was presented to Annette for her to keep. Gone but not forgotten.

Roll of Honour 2015

- **Player of the Year** – awarded to **Jeremy Goulding** for representing Avon in almost every age category of the Inter-counties and doing so well!
- **Jeremy Burns greatest contribution to squash award** – awarded to **Charlotte Weldrake** for all the coaching and support of the juniors, organising the county girls teams, helping organise tournaments/fixtures, representing the county while continuing to play and improving fast!
- **Most Improved player of the Year** – based on the ranking system over the last 12 months and awarded to **Graham Parsons** for an amazing 130% improvement over the year! This is what it looks like:



- **SquashLevels Cup** – based on the player with the most hits on the website and awarded to **Mike Harris** with 357 interested onlookers this year.

Trophies

Mixed league play-off winners

- Prem A - BLTSC Tigers A
- Prem B - Thornbury A
- Prem C – BAWA A
- Div 1A – Westbury David Lloyd B
- Div 1B – Weston Squash & Racketball Club B
- Div 2A – BAWA B
- Div 2B – Bath University 2
- Div 2C – David Lloyd E
- Div 3A – Thornbury D
- Div 3B – Lansdown D
- Div 4A – Kingswood A
- Div 4B – David Lloyd F

Trophies were handed out at the AGM but it's a shame that most of the teams weren't represented so there were few players to hand the trophies to. Do please display your trophy at your club if you can.

Ladies league winners

Weston ladies took the clean sweep with Weston 1 winning Division 1 and Weston 2 winning Division 2. Unfortunately we had the exact opposite problem with the ladies winners – we had the winning teams ready to collect the trophies but no trophies! Sorry about that.

We're hoping to arrange some sort of match/dinner/trophy hand-over at some point. Pippa to talk to Nick about the trophies and Carol Burrows to talk to Pippa about the event.

League reports

Mixed – Richard Bickers

Just a few thoughts from my experience of running the leagues for a year now...

Generating fixtures is hard work and time consuming taking around 20 hours and 100 emails to get them sorted each time. It's been made a lot harder of late because we've lost a lot of courts and yet

have the same number of teams playing. The only way to make it all fit is by starting earlier and finishing later in the season and then playing on Thursdays and Tuesdays as well. There are 340+ fixtures to arrange and even doing that it doesn't always fit.

A lot of the clubs have constraints such as the leisure centres setting days aside for club night for instance and the uni teams can only play term time. So far, with a bit of jiggling around and some flexibility from some of the teams, we've been able to make it all fit. It does feel very much on the edge though.

You can help the process along by replying promptly when asked for how many teams you want to enter and making sure those teams can commit so we don't have a bunch dropping out in the first two weeks. Please also let me know ahead of time if you have any constraints around dates or days that you really can't work around but please also try to be flexible. When the first pass fixtures are available please check them and let me know if there are problems. There are always a couple of teams who wait until the fixtures are frozen before telling me about something they could have told me two weeks earlier.

This is my general approach to queries during the season:

- I assume everyone is trying to get a team out and not trying to pull a fast one
- Sensible, reasonable rule breeches are generally OK as long as there's no unfair advantage but you need to tell me beforehand and it mustn't be too complicated!
- I expect teams to play fair which means; everyone plays in about the right order, they don't use ringers and everyone does their best to get their regular team out on the night.
- The rules try to enforce fairness so any breach of rule needs to be considered carefully.

Some final requests:

- Please avoid emails like: 'Hi Rich. It's Andy. Can John pay at 3 tonight?' That's half an hour of investigation just to find out what you're on about!
- Please avoid critical questions about who can play and in what order at 6pm on a Weds! I can't always drop everything, do the research and get back to you in time

Ladies – Pippa Green

Pippa's full end of season report is at the back of the minutes so please have a look at that but, in summary, it was a good season and the knock-out at the end went very well. There will need to be some thinking about how best to arrange the divisions next year and, in general, how to increase the number of ladies players.

Doubles

No update from last year but please be thinking about whether you want to enter this year. The request for teams will be going out soon (as a news item).

Rule updates

Rescheduling matches earlier

This will be OK if both captains agree and results are in before the penalties kick in. The official match date doesn't change.

Rescheduling matches later

This will be OK if both captains and the league secretary agrees. The new fixture date needs to be updated on the system. The match needs to be re-scheduled no later than one week after the end of the season (based on the original fixture list) but could be done so that one or both teams end up playing twice in a week. Not ideal but better than missing the match completely.

Equal team points

If two teams have the same number of points at the end of the season then the following will be taken into account to decide on the order:

1. Most match wins
2. Head to Head results

Bonus points

Not a rule change – but this was discussed and re-agreed that you need full team to qualify for bonus points.

Playing more than once per week

To help alleviate the crunch on getting a team out, it was agreed that it's OK for a player to play more than once in the same week as long as their 'other' match is for a higher team. This will take some clever coding on the system so may not happen all that quickly so, for now, please let me know if this applies to your team – ahead of time – and we'll work through the ensuing penalties afterwards!

Single dot balls

It was agreed that it's OK to use single dot balls if both captains agree. This is aimed at those cold courts on cold winter's days – not a comedy match in the heat of summer!

Topics raised (before and during the AGM)

Knocking up

Please be courteous of your opponent when knocking up. The official rules state that you shouldn't hit it back to yourself more than three times before hitting it back to your opponent. We've all been frustrated by an opponent who hits it back to themselves ten times and then boasts it over to you. Don't let that be you!!

Feel free to remind your opponent of the rules if they do this and you can also mention it to the referee who should now be watching out for this. Not that there are any penalties to apply but shaming your opponent in front of their friends on the balcony should be enough...

Play-offs

There was some discussion about whether we really need the play-offs anymore. The discussion amounted to:

- Yes, let's keep them but make them a more significant end of season event
- Fix the date right at the beginning as part of the event
- Can BAD support the cost of the courts?
- We need to think about how to help finance them.

There are some actions for the committee to follow up on there. Any other suggestions please get in touch.

Communication

We don't have an email distribution list but we do have the news articles which everyone can see if they register on the website. All captains and admins will already be registered.

The proposal was to turn on the 'receive news articles by email' preference for all registered users and then have the system send them the email (as long as long as they have accessed the site in the last six months so we don't send updates to people who don't use the site anymore).

This has been done now. Do look out for announcements via these news articles. If you really don't want to see them then you can uncheck that option in your preferences again.

Squash rules

It was agreed that we should put a copy of the actual rules on the website. This is to cover the normal rules of squash including the rules around lets, strokes and no-lets. Nick took the action to find some rules that we can post.

IT update

Badsquash

No significant changes to the website are planned but since it is the same code as the SquashLevels website you may notice changes that come through from that system. E.g. the player stats table that magically appeared.

Club boxes

Just a reminder that you can run club boxes directly on the website for free and have your results fed straight into the levels/ranking system. Just have a look at the help on the system to find out more.

SquashLevels

SquashLevels (www.squashlevels.com) is an evolution of the badsquash website that receives results from many other systems around the country so that players have a combined history for all their matches wherever they may have played. It is now partnered with ESR and is on the way to being the national ranking system. It's being used by around 10,000 current players across the country and has nearly 600,000 results on it now!

Badsquash users have the same level based ranking algorithm as SquashLevels but if you want to see your history on SquashLevels then just click on the 'Lookup on...' link on your player history page. You may find features on SquashLevels that aren't available on badsquash.

Mobile app

We tried to work with a Bristol Uni team of students to develop an app that would streamline the whole business of selecting a team, marking the matches on the night and entering the results. It looked very promising for a while but it wasn't quite finished when the team disbanded at the end of the year so it's not quite there yet. If we can get it finished off then it could be very nice but, until then, we'll have to leave it on the back burner. If you're interested in helping out then please get in touch!

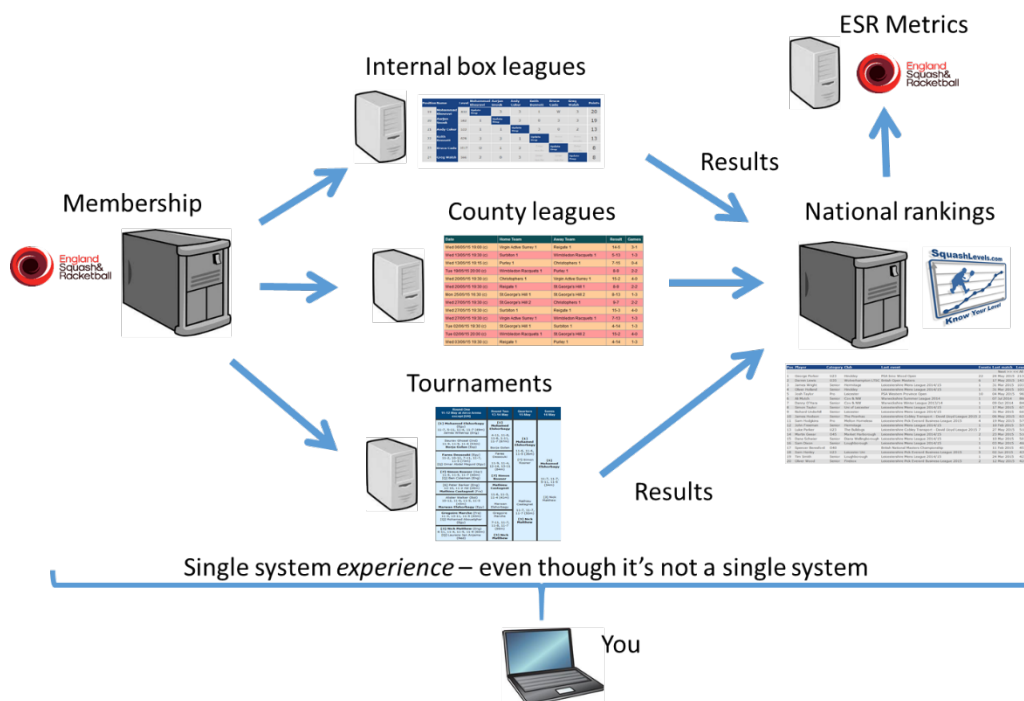
ESR system community – not really covered at the AGM but it was on the agenda!

ESR are in the process of reviewing how counties and clubs access software to run their leagues, club boxes and tournaments. There are quite a few providers available and, although we probably have the best county league system and decent support for boxes, we could potentially make use of online software for running tournaments.

The plan is to catalogue the available providers and make it easy for counties to choose one based on their needs. All providers will be encouraged to use ESR membership number to identify the players and output their results to SquashLevels.

We may be able to find some good tournament software as a result of this process so look out for news on that. If you run tournaments then please get in touch so we can take your needs into account.

Here's the vision diagram shown at the recent ESR council meeting:



AVON JUNIOR SQUASH ACTIVITY 2014/15 SEASON

Junior Inter Counties

This Season Avon entered 4 teams again into the Inter County Championships with a Boys Under 13, 15, 17 team entered and also a Girls Under 17's team.

All teams and players competed very well throughout the tournament with a special congrats to the Girls team for reaching the trophy Final.

We are very confident of being able to enter an extra age group next season as the young players are now developing and ready for County activity, we should also retain the teams/players that have entered last year.

Junior County Tournaments

The Avon Junior Squash Grand Prix 14/15 season (Graded event for all abilities)

This Circuit was set up last season with the idea of encouraging Avon Squash's juniors to participate in competition but in a less intimidating environment than say an England Squash event. It would also help the players develop, gain experience and perhaps get opportunity's to represent the county or even enter some Tournaments out of Bristol.

With Events increasing from 4 last season to 5 this season it has already grown.

The events were/are being played at BLTSC, LANSDOWN, VIVOSPORTS, BRADLEY STOKE + Junior County Closed.

There are still 2 events to play 1 at BLTSC and 1 at Bradley stoke but participation numbers have been averaging 40 kids at the events although the Lansdown event receiving slightly lower entries it is very important to continue with the model of including all local clubs that have the facility to host these events and as participation across Avon Junior Squash grows so will the events numbers.

Junior Development Squads

The Junior development squads run once a month at various clubs across the county and have been very popular this year. County Coaches deliver sessions aimed to help those players below County standard to help improve their squash or to help with aspirations to play for the county team in the future. Last season Participation numbers were low but now due to this season's success the county is receiving money from these squads which can be put back into junior development for the future. We also had 3 players who have now represented the county teams this year through this system so well done to Matt Galliford (Vivo+bltsc), Carlos Davey (Bltsc) and Micaela Phillips (Kingswood, Vivo).

New Girls only Development squads

With the Great help of Rose Bamber and Charlotte Weldrake (county coaches) we have set up some girls only development squads which have been running since the start of the season with the aim to encourage girls participation in squash. We have a list of 15 Girls involved in the coaching programmes and attending these squads and I'm sure these will continue to grow as there is now a system set up for new female players to slot into.

Next Season it seems very likely we will be able to enter an under 13 Girls team as well as an Under 17 team due to our newcomers and younger players starting to develop which is great news!

Avon Squash Girls vs South Africa

With the Help of Rich Colman and Charlotte Weldrake at Lansdown the Avon Squash girls got to take on a travelling South African Girls School who were touring England. It was a fantastic day for the girls involved and great fun and lots of experience gained.

Well done to Gemma Bedford, Annabelle Moore , Micaela Phillips, Meg Williams, Courtney Bean

Schools and Community Out Reach Projects

With the majority of outdoor events happening when the good weather is around Avon Squash have many plans to head to fairs and public events this summer to draw people into our clubs and have a go at squash or racketball.

To name a few we will be setting up our mini squash walls at:

- The south west school games at Bath Uni where 1500 kids will be taking part from across the south west.
- Staple Hill School fete
- Redland May fair
- Millenium Square Events (sports day etc etc)

If you would like us to help with promoting your club or know a venue who would like us there please get in touch.

Many Thanks **Richard King** (Avon Squash Development Manager)

Ladies league report from Pippa

At long last- the 2014/2015 season is over, we have completed all our matches, and all scores are available on the website - except for the last 3 weeks of the Div 1 season (Knock out tournament.)

Division 2 seemed to have had a competitive season post Xmas, with a really close run in to the final week - Weston 2 and Kingsdown both in a position to win the league - after final; matches this week, Weston 2 have narrowly taken the Div 2 title - by 1 point! Kingsdown did seem to get the benefit (?) of receiving most bonus points, (having won 4 matches against incomplete teams for opposition) but were nevertheless up there competing for 1st place all season. Well done especially to both these teams, but to all the Div 2 teams for making such a good go of this season; Chippenham, David Lloyd and Bath Uni have all competed well, I note, and whilst Bristol Uni 2 have struggled a little in some matches, they have certainly improved over the season.

In Div 1, as Lynx got promoted from Div 2 after Xmas, Redland Club restructured themselves to create 3 more evenly matched teams, there were 7 teams in all competing this season- this meant there was not time for everyone to play each other twice before Easter - so instead, we all played each other once, and then organised a small knockout event over the ensuing 3 weeks to fill the last 3 weeks of the season. After that 1st half, Redland Jaguars were leading the field- so they became 1st seeds for the final 3 week knockout event. We then all played off in seed order- Lansdown beat Vivo, Weston 1 beat Bristol Uni 1 and Redland Panthers beat Redland Lynx in the 1st week. The following week, Weston beat Lansdown 3-2 and Redland Jaguars beat Redland Panthers 4-1 whilst Redland Lynx beat Vivo in the other half. This pitched Redland Jaguars against Weston 1 in the final- and in a closely fought fixture last Thursday, Weston 1 came out winners by 4 -1 on the night. Panthers similarly beat Lansdown 4-1 for 3rd place, and sadly Redland Lynx had to concede to Bristol Uni due to lack of players on the night.

Final order in Div 1 - Weston 1, Redland Jaguars, Redland Panthers, Lansdown, Bristol Uni 1, Redland Lynx, Vivo Sports.

And Div 2 - Weston 2, Kingsdown, Chippenham, David Lloyd, Bath Uni, Bristol Uni 2

So, at the end of this year, Weston 1 have won Div 1 and Weston 2 have won Div 2- Well Done to all the Weston Super Mare ladies!

It may be that the League do organise a Play Off event between the Div 1 winners of the 1st half of this season v the Winners of the 2nd half. We may have confused this by running our tournament now, but I believe if this event does take place, maybe the "old" Jaguars should play off v Weston 1- (rather than replay last Thursday's event?) Comments would be welcome!

I would like to thank you all for making my season so easy- I have received a few questions along the way, which was great- and no trouble! Thank you for entering scores promptly, agreeing to rearrangements where appropriate, and not fielding ineligible players or mixing orders etc. I will be happy to continue my role as League Secretary into next year if requested, but if anyone would prefer to take over, please say so?!

Also, I would like to encourage any feedback, or suggestions, or thoughts/proposals for next year- and if any of you know of other teams or players who might be interested in joining the leagues, we would like to make them very welcome. Please encourage your Clubs to continue supporting the leagues - we are running low on ladies teams now- we don't need to lose any of you and would be delighted to start boosting team numbers again if possible.

Thanks to all again,

Pippa