

In a break from the normal routine, we kicked off league tennis this calendar year with a new team, the Matt Dunn-led Winter League team. We were newly entered into this league, and thus started at the bottom – this led to an easy promotion, and hopefully to more challenging fixtures starting at the back end of 2023. Players were Matt Dunn, Dan Williams, Alex Grafton, Andy Young, Harry Malone, Joey Porter, Louis Edge and Fil Calcutt.

Alongside this, we had our usual Spring League entries. The 'A' team, captained by Harry Malone, achieved a 2nd place finish, though admittedly a couple of teams dropped out of the league part way through. Nonetheless, the league is of a good level, and will be again next year. Players who represented the A's were Harry Malone, Jack Malone, Louis Edge, Andy Young, Joey Porter, Lois Porter, Sam Hiskett, Matt Dunn, Phil Shakeshaft, Ben Gough and Harry Tippetts.

The 'B' team, captained by Jo Brattle, had a really solid season and ended up in a steady mid-table position (5th out of 9). They had several regular players who made big contributions to a strong showing, and can build on it next year. Thanks to Paul Foster, Emma Lycett, Mark Freeman, Sarah Kirk, Anne Lycett, Phil Kelly, Kate Kelly, Craig Nash, Helen Atherton, Louise Baker, Karen Morris, Rob Schofield and Hilary Brattle.

Then came the Summer League season. On the men's side, we once again entered five teams: The first team managed to stay up in the Premier League, and will compete in the top league for the third straight year. Led by skipper Jack Malone, players included Joey Porter, a returning Sam Hiskett, Louis Edge, Harry Malone, Phil Shakeshaft, Matt Dunn, Tom Barton, Ben Gough and Harry Tippetts. A big thanks to everyone who filled in when needed!

The 2nd team came up short by the finest of margins in their bid for back-to-back promotions, losing out on set percentage (62.88 to 62.50). It was a tough end to what was an incredibly positive season; one which sets them up to have another crack next year. Dave Green captained the team, and was joined by Matt Dunn, Phil Shakeshaft, Dan Williams, Rob Schofield, Louis Edge, Andy Young and James Smallwood.

The 3's were captained by Fil Calcutt, and managed a brilliant promotion, having come up just shy in 2022! They were in contention all season, but had a surge towards the end, winning the last 5 matches to clinch 2nd place in the league. Roll on Division 4!! Joining captain Fil were Andy Young, Rob Schofield, Bryan Connell, Graham Mather, Duncan Mayne, Matt Dunn, Alex Grafton, Kunny Dhillon, Chris Rhodes, James Smallwood and Matt Quinn.

The 4th team weren't ever in any real relegation trouble, and ended up cementing a 5th place finish. This was a respectable finish in a league containing several clubs who are rising up through the leagues year on year. Joining captain Matt Quinn were Kunny Dhillon, Mark Horobin, Alex Grafton, Craig Nash, James Lea, Dave Lea, Bryan Connell, Andy Young, Will Morris, Colin Grafton and Paul Foster.

Finally, the 5th team competed in Division 7 under new captain Mark Freeman, achieving a 6th place finish. The team included several newer members alongside some of the old faces. Thanks to Jim Hughes, Chris Freeman, Anthony Morris, Phil Kelly, Kunny Dhillon, Matt Quinn, Mark Horobin, Paul Foster, Dom Marks, Will Morris and Dean Henry.

Overall this represented a positive season, with no relegations, a promotion and some strong showings from the other teams.

Vets 2023 report from Bob Harris:

The Men's Vets teams had a tough season in 2022 with both finishing in the bottom two places. However, the addition of three new teams in 2023 meant that both retained their divisional places: the A-team in Division 2 and the B-team in Division 4.

Results to date in the 2023 season show that the A-team will again be fighting to retain their Division 2 status. A draw last Sunday moved the team above Knowle & Dorridge with the bottom four teams separated by just three points. Regulars for the A-team are Fil Calcutt, Graham Mather, Rob Schofield and Phil Shakeshaft supported by Dave Green, Chris Rhodes and Andy Young – with Paul Foster, Chris Freeman and Ant Morris making guest appearances to win valuable rubbers.

The B- team have defied early speculation by reaching second place and are now in a contest for the upper reaches of Division 4 with five teams separated by just four points. Team regulars are Dean Henry, Ant Morris, Patrick Parry-Evans, Paul Foster and Dave Tippetts with support from Chris Freeman, Bob Harris, Alex Nurse, Matt Quinn and Graham Selby.

Mixed doubles report from Phil Shakeshaft:

Another successful season for our winter mixed team with the 1st team finishing runners up to Warwick Boat Club for the second season in a row, quite an achievement. The 2nds performed excellently, getting promoted from Division 3 to 2. A good season all round.

We are currently playing more competitive league tennis than ever before as a club, which is offering the whole membership opportunities to get playing matches. This is also allowing some younger adults and junior players the chance to gain more experience of men's doubles. This looks set to continue into 2024 and we should be able to look forward to another positive year on the court.

Captaining teams is not easy and can often be a thankless task, so I want to express my gratitude, and I'm sure that of the rest of the members, to all those who put themselves forward to captain a team. It makes the amount of tennis we play possible and the captains do a lot of work behind the scenes which shouldn't go unnoticed. Special mention to Matt Quinn for his continued work with men's practice nights, and general all-round support.

Here's to a great 2024.