

NORTHUMBERLAND
LAWN
TENNIS ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

NORTHUMBERLAND LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020

My Report this year is a Chairman's Report on a year which has been exceptional for the absence of most of our normal tennis activity due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Instead of celebrating success on and off court over the last twelve months, it has been a year of lockdowns, club and court closures and almost no competition. At the time of writing, we are still in a national lockdown although there is hope that 2021 will see a return to play as the new vaccines are rolled out across the country and tennis begins to open up after 29 March 2021.

Following the declaration of the first lockdown on 23 March 2020, the first casualty was our own AGM which had been arranged for Thursday 26th March 2020. With the alternating fortunes of the ability of gatherings to take place and the lack of availability of indoor space, we have as an Association continued to oversee County activities with the existing NLTA Council and colleagues. In particular we have maintained contact with our LTA North Region colleagues through regular Zoom meetings. However, as we have become familiar with the operation of virtual meetings, we are holding an AGM on-line this year.

Early on, the LTA announced a package of financial support measures to help clubs, coaches and officials through the difficult period following the March 2020 closures. Direct financial support was provided to coaches working 30 or more hours a week and a hardship fund was established for affected clubs severely affected by the closures. I am pleased to report that no Northumberland registered club felt it necessary to claim on this fund.

In addition to LTA financial support, clubs with a rateable value have been able to claim business support grants from their local Councils which has helped to maintain solvency. A further coach support scheme was promoted by the LTA through County Associations for part-time coaches working between 10 and 29 hours a week. In the event, only two coaches made a claim on the Association and payments were made out of County funds.

Since the first lockdown restrictions during which courts and clubhouses/indoor facilities were relaxed in June 2020, outdoor tennis was possible until the Tier restrictions came into place on 4th November which lasted for 4 weeks. Once again, clubs had to close their courts and clubhouses, only to be able to re-open for a short window through the pre-Christmas period and then to be shut again on 31 December 2020.

Competition has been severely affected by the closures and the need to maintain social distancing measures. The County tournaments for 2020 did not take place, all junior (with the exception of the U18s event at the end of February 2020) and senior County Cup events and all Veterans fixtures were cancelled. Further, the Northumberland & Durham League did not take place for the 2020 season, although what came to be known as a "pop-league" did take place involving a number of clubs during mid to late summer 2020.

The closures have had a significant effect on the Northumberland Club with impacts on Club finances, membership and all normal Club activities and staff who, in the main, have had to be furloughed. Across the LTA North Region, the closure of the large Clubs has had a disproportionate effect on memberships and finances. The Association has worked closely with the Northumberland Club Executive through our Joint Liaison Committee to provide support during this difficult period. Following an extensive discussion with Newcastle City Council an agreement was reached with the Valuation Office regarding a separation of the rateable value relating to the County Ground which enabled the Northumberland Club and the Gordon Brewis Indoor Centre to be recognised as separate entities and therefore to be able to claim the appropriate Covid-19 Business Support grants.

The Northumberland Club has put its grants to good use, supported by drawing on reserves, first of all by upgrading the floodlighting on three artificial grass courts (courts 10-12) and then resurfacing those courts with artificial clay, the latter project also supported by an NLTA loan; this will give returning members an excellent facility for when return to play and competition becomes possible.

The Northumberland Tennis Academy was able to resume a limited coaching programme during summer 2021 and a brief report is included in the Annual Report from Chris Sanderson, Academy Manager, on Academy activities.

There was a strong focus on working with Clubs and coaches when the new registration period opened on 1st October 2020 to ensure that all venues were able to meet the new LTA requirement for all level 3, 4 and 5 coaches to have their accreditation fully up to date and for all Club Welfare Officers to have their DBS and safeguarding training up to date. My thanks to Sue Oswald, who as our County Safeguarding Officer worked tirelessly with clubs, Welfare officers and coaches to ensure all our Clubs were compliant.

A new framework for coach education and coach qualifications has been developed by the LTA and the latter part of the year saw the appointment of Leeds Beckett University as the new provider of coach courses under the new framework. We have participated in the roll-out of the new structure in the County to our coaches in conjunction with Leeds Beckett staff and Jo Cunliffe, the Workforce Development Partner for the LTA North Region. I am hopeful that over time this new framework will lead to a general raising of coaching across all counties.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we were unable to hold our annual Northumberland Tennis Awards event in August 2020. However, Clubs were invited to submit nominations to the LTA under the LTA Awards scheme and following receipt and consideration by our County Awards Panel, the following were the successful winners in the three categories in which nominations were submitted:

Development Coach of the Year	Grant Watson
Club of the Year	Beverley Park TC
Volunteer of the Year	Helen French (Northumberland Club)

Congratulations to the above who will be presented with an LTA Certificate at an appropriate County event when tennis is opened up following the easing of Covid restrictions.

I would like to thank all the volunteers and coaches within clubs who have endeavoured to maintain their facilities and worked with their memberships to ensure a viable future when normal times return.

My thanks to members of the NLTA Council for their continued support and in particular to Tom Kinloch, Martin Clark and George Murphy who as members of our Executive Committee have continued to deal with a wide range of matters during this difficult year, to Jane Grey who has continued to represent the County so effectively as our LTA councillor, to Sue Oswald for her continued commitment to promoting good safeguarding practice across the County and to Kim Sanderson who has continued to provide invaluable support in her roles as County Administrator and Academy Administrator.

Northumberland Tennis Academy Manager, Chris Sanderson
Report 2020

The last 12 months has been a very challenging time for the Northumberland Tennis Academy for obvious reasons. The Covid-19 pandemic caused severe disruption to a large proportion of the training year as well as limiting the competitive opportunities for our young players.

Between the various levels of restriction being implemented and subsequently lifted, NTA has tried to be flexible in its approach to the format of training being offered whilst adhering to Covid-19 protocols at all times. The NTA coaching staff made efforts in social distancing on court and implementing a one-way system into NCTC and I would like to thank them for their professionalism.

NTA has multiple roles that include operating as a County Training venue, an LTA Local Player Development Centre (LPDC) and an established performance academy but at times was only able to offer individual lessons whilst group sessions were prohibited. The response from both players and parents alike, to these changing and challenging limitations, has been excellent and a very successful period of summer daytime training took place and was very well supported. We were able to run the first half term of winter training as planned in September before Tier 4 restrictions caused us to halt all activity once again and then finding ourselves in the current period of national lockdown.

County Training has been delivered in all age groups from U8 to U18, although the usual schedule of County Cup Events did not take place. The LPDC programme, which focuses on the U10 age group, was similarly disrupted but will continue to offer training opportunities for talented players moving forwards in 2021.

At a grass roots level our closer links with the Northumberland Club have continued allowing movement between the two programmes dependent upon standard and progression but with the ultimate goal of providing the most appropriate training opportunities to all players. Unfortunately, school links and curriculum time coaching was not what we had hoped, but plans are in place to resume these as soon as the situation allows.

In summary, 2020 was a year of significantly reduced tennis activity for all of us and was particularly frustrating for our performance juniors who have shown the commitment needed to succeed but have not had the opportunities they expected to have this year.

Northumberland LTA 2020 End of Year Report
Laurie Haines – Participation Development Partner (PDP)
Jo Cunliffe – Workforce Development Partner (WDP)

Venues

- **COVID support calls**
 - LTA PDP Laurie Haines completed support calls with all 26 Registered Venues to ensure all clubs in Northumberland aware of LTA, Government and Sport England COVID support. Also used calls to ensure venues aware of latest LTA support around club development, including back to tennis campaign and LTA Rally
 - No clubs in Northumberland reported significant concerns regarding the financial impact of COVID and the resulting lockdowns.
 - No venues accessing LTA Venue Hardship Loan
- **LTA Minimum Standards**
 - Continued close partnership working between NLTA Safeguarding Officer Sue Oswald, LTA PDP Laurie Haines and LTA WDP Jo Cunliffe to support all NLTA to ensure all Minimum Standards in place in order to renew Venue Registration.
 - 30 venues registered with the LTA for the 2020/21 membership year - 26 clubs, 3 parks & 1 commercial
- **Joint Regional/County approach to Venue Support**
 - Strong, joined up working established between NLTA and LTA Regional Team
 - Coverage of club support achieved across all registered venues in Northumberland
 - Regular Regional/NLTA meetings maintained throughout 2020
- **2020 LTA Autumn Venue Forums**
 - Due to COVID restrictions and guidance around social distancing, the decision was made to run the calendar of Autumn Forums online as Zoom Webinars
 - The online format enabled a greater number of sessions to be provided, to support venues around a range of topics, linked to the 5 key health areas and beyond.
 - 19 Webinar bookings were registered by NLTA venues, representing 9 NLTA clubs in total
- **Online booking, Clubspark & LTA Rally**
 - 22 NLTA venues now utilising online booking system (members only or P&P)

- 9 venues signed up to LTA Rally platform in 2020
- **Tyne Met College**
 - Tyne Met College supported through LTA FE support offer. College supported to develop and deliver a bespoke Tennis Plan for 2019/20 academic year, focussing on participation growth, competition engagement and workforce development
 - Participation targets on track when lockdown restrictions announced. Targets revisited for 2020/21 Action Plan

Programmes

- **Disability & Inclusion**
 - Indoor centre closures during 2020 had a disproportionate impact on disability activity
 - Where activity was able to continue, in line with Government Guidance, venues and coaches were supported to deliver inclusive programmes safely. Regular contact with venues and coaches was maintained through 2020, by the LTA's PDP and Disability Development Partner, as well as OC Lead RISE (formerly Tyne & Wear Sport), to ensure all were aware of guidelines around tennis and any changes to rules
 - 4 venues in Northumberland in 2020 were supported to deliver inclusive activity, through the LTA Open Court Network. A number of new inclusive programmes and links were established in 2020 at Beverley Park LTC, including a successful Walking Tennis initiative
 - 6 NLTA venues have now completed Open Your Doors Training. The Open Your Doors workshop, delivered by LTA Disability Lead Matt Elkington, is designed to help venues and coaches understand the simple steps and interventions that they can make, to become more inclusive and accessible.
- **SERVES**
 - SERVES venues were also disproportionately affected by the COVID pandemic in 2020, with many centres converted to community hubs. The Howden Hub in North Tyneside, for example, was repurposed as a food bank, meaning continuation of the tennis sessions was not possible
 - Contact was maintained with all SERVES sites throughout 2020, to offer support around tennis delivery, notify centres of upcoming rule changes and to provide ongoing guidance
 - Howden Hub – tennis activity at the site launched in early 2020, but was quickly put on hold due to the lockdown restrictions and (as above) conversion of the hall to a community food hub. The LTA are supporting the centre to restart tennis activity in Spring 2021

Workforce

The devastation and disruption caused by Covid-19 has been significant. It has impacted everything and everyone, and our self employed coaches, coaches, volunteers and tennis communities have faced massive uncertainty and challenges over the last 12 months. As we know, people are the most important driving force behind our sport, and the way the tennis community have come together has been incredible, and we are hoping this strength, courage and perseverance will bring our communities even closer to help the sport thrive, once the country opens back up again.

We are very much looking forward to working with the below coaches, along with volunteers and venues once things become a bit more normal!

Northumberland Coach Landscape – 2020

Accredited	Accredited +	Total Accredited Coaches	Male	Female	% of female coaches
30	19	49	31	18	37%

LTA Breakdown of Accredited Coaches

L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	Total
0	16	16	15	2	49

LTA Breakdown of LTA Youth Trained Coaches

L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	Total
0	6	7	9	2	24

- **COVID Support for coaches**
 - 17 NLTA coaches accessed LTA COVID grant support
 - 5 NLTA coaches accessed County hardship support
- **LTA Youth Coach Training**
 - 25 number of coaches in Northumberland completed LTA Youth practical Training
 - 19 venues in Northumberland have a liked coach that has completed LTA Youth Training

Promotion

- **Website**

- The new NLTA county Clubspark website continued to provide high quality support to registered venues in Northumberland. In particular the site provided clarity for venues around ever-changing COVID guidance, signposting venues to national LTA guidance
- The website continues to promote all LTA registered venues in the County, providing direct links to their respective websites
- The County website can be viewed at [**www.northumberlandtennis.org.uk**](http://www.northumberlandtennis.org.uk)

- **Social media**

- Thank you to Ashleigh Baines for overseeing social media promotion for Northumberland in 2020, during what was undoubtedly a challenging year

Northumberland Ladies and Men's Tennis Team Report

Due to the pandemic, no events took place.

NVTA Annual Report for County AGM

There is very little to report for the year 2020-21. There have been no fixtures due to the Covid 19 pandemic and all County Veterans practices were cancelled. We look forward to the opening of the Northumberland Club facilities and hope to be in a position to reinstate practices in the spring. A provisional fixture list has been circulated to our team captains; a decision has been made by the national committee to group the fixtures more locally. Despite these changes, a certain amount of travelling will be required, and we will need to decide if this will be safe to do. We hope that we at least see some NVTA tennis this year and are aiming for a full competitive schedule in 2022.

Junior County Cup Overview – Under 18's **Jordan Simpson**

For 2020, both our boys and girls' teams travelled to Sheffield, to represent Northumberland in what was a competitive weekend for all 17 players involved, alongside the three travelling captains – Jordan Simpson, Adam Boba and Sam Archer. A good competitive weekend from both teams.

Our boys earned promotion to group 5 after a few years of closely missing out on the accolade, whilst the girls battled well throughout the weekend to stay in group 5 with what was a fairly young team. The boys beat Channel Islands 9-0, South of Scotland 6-3 and then Bedfordshire 5-3 on the final day to clinch promotion.

In what was one of the closely contested groups seen for a while, the girls beat Suffolk 5-4 on day one, before losing narrowly to both Northamptonshire and Derbyshire, the score 5-4 in both. In this group, every rubber counted towards the end result.

The boys team consisted of Ronan Lunn, Matthew Nice, Gareth Rickaby, Marcus Jeffery, Sam Knowles, Dennis Lapping, Ben Kelliher and Dan Burn.

The girls team consisted of Emma Charlton, Abby Kelliher, Elena Baughman-Saunders, Kirstin McLeod, Liv Clark, Jess Hart, Teddy Prisadnikova, Aimee Knowles and Lydia Smith.

14&U, 12&U, 10&U and 9 Mixed Events

Due to the pandemic, no events took place.

The Northumberland Tennis Awards and all tournaments were cancelled due to the pandemic.