

Hillhead Tennis Club Annual Report

Prepared for Hillhead Sports Club AGM, September 2021

A very interesting year for Tennis; a sport which was impacted less than many others due to its native on-court social distancing. Lockdown presented a continual juggling act around what was and was not permitted throughout the varying restriction levels. Having been fully closed during the first lockdown of 2020, Tennis was eventually permitted to continue, but with restrictions on player numbers, coaching, group activities and the availability of changing rooms/toilets, all dependant on which restriction tier we were in.

The Committee and Coaching team worked extremely hard during the ever-changing Covid landscape to maintain safe operations for all. We had regular member communications, we continually updated our information/infographic posters and introduced a full online booking mechanism to tightly control attendance numbers and provide a “Track and Trace” capability. With the support of the Club, Committee and Members, we had no identified cases of Covid at HTC, allowing Tennis to continue mostly uninterrupted.

This made Tennis a very attractive sport for many and as a result member numbers continued to swell throughout the year - now at over 450 Tennis members. While this is positive from a HSC Subscription perspective, reduced group activity and lots of “working from home” meant a lot of players making full use of courts at all hours of the day, making it very congested at all times. In order to reduce this congestion, we had to implement a fair usage policy and, for a short while, to restrict new joiners on a waiting list basis.

Thankfully as we trend towards the old “normality” again, we can relax some of these measures and once again welcome new members and occasional guests to Hillhead Tennis Club.

We successfully recruited a replacement Head Coach 12 months ago in Ashley (Ash) Webster who brought a wealth of experience from across the UK, US and Spain. Ash has already made a massive impact on the Coaching program with growing demand and improving standards visible at all levels, despite having the most difficult 12 months of ever-changing restrictions and limited access to the full Clubhouse facilities. Much of the recent growth in Member numbers can be attributed to this growth in demand for coaching and we continue to work closely with Ash to maximise this opportunity.

The trend of new members in the last year (and somewhat before) has shown the Tennis Club experience a shift towards younger players – and predominantly male. We are now reviewing this trend along with team player numbers (and successes), social player trends and general player activity across all ages and genders, to help us identify the areas where we feel we can progress and focus our efforts in the coming years to ensure Hillhead Tennis Club continues to thrive. We have also undertaken two comprehensive Member surveys in the past year to ensure we keep fully abreast of our member feedback and concerns and don’t lose sight of the core values of the Club and its Members.

The primary Summer Tennis Season has recently concluded, and we are now heading into the Winter season which provides almost as much team competition year-round. Our Teams enjoyed a very successful Summer season, with some very strong results pushing the top three Men's teams into higher divisions than in recent years, and the Women cementing their place among the stronger teams in the West. The Junior Girls enjoyed an exceptional season and continue to go from strength to strength, with the boys not far behind.

In recent weeks we have revised our online presence, with a redesigned website and an enhanced social media presence giving us a much-improved outward facing profile. Our target is to provide better quality and more regular communications to Members about ongoing activities and successes at Hillhead, and to deliver an improved window on the Club to the wider community who may be considering taking up tennis or moving to a new Club. We are currently also progressing funding options to allow us to replace our dated halogen floodlights with modern LED lamps. The savings alone will deliver a 60% saving in electricity costs to the Sports Club, allowing the replacement cost to be repaid within 3 years, and providing a much-reduced maintenance headache.

Keith Fowler
Hillhead Tennis Club.