



President's Address 2020:

Welcome to the County's Annual General Meeting, albeit 7 months later than intended. Our county constitution requires us to have a general meeting annually, so the current Covid situation has left us with no option but to hold a virtual meeting. It is therefore encouraging that you have all found the time to be with us. What I have to say will in general cover 2019 and activities coming out of that year.

Firstly our county teams starting with

Summer County week was a hot and challenging week and despite some very competitive close matches, the ladies were relegated from Group 3 to 4 while the men retained their place in Group 5. Winter County cup saw the ladies finish bottom of Group 4B while the men finished 3rd in Group 3A.

Major successes came with Ladies 35 team winning Div 2 and when they eventually play again, will move up to Div1 for the first time in the County's history. Men's 35 team finished 3rd in Group 5A.

More success was achieved by our Senior teams with the Ladies 55 winning Div2, Ladies 60 winning Div 3 and Men's 60 winning Div 2 & Mens 45's cup in Div 2. Thus all will move up to a higher Division when play resumes.

Following a highly successful first year of a return to Junior County Training in line with the LTA Player Pathway scheme, the 2nd year continued to consolidate the programme with 98% of players returning plus an expansion of additional hitting squads. Our County Performance Coach Matt Jackman is to be congratulated on achieving an outstanding programme, acknowledged by players, parents and importantly by the LTA nationally. The support of coaches was outstanding and encouraging and proved pivotal in achieving the success in year 1. An extensive review indicating the impact of that first year was carried out by Alan Jones and appeared in booklet form "Down the Line". Copies were distributed, but I'm sure are still available if required.

Our junior county teams had some tough opposition but all conducted themselves well and played to their best ability. Our 2 stand out teams were u9's gaining silver medal and Girls u18's being cup.

Our 2019 Awards Evening on 17th January 20, at the Stadium of Light, attended by some 250 people, was considered another great success and huge credit for that must go to Christine and Anne who spent many hours ensuring the evening went smoothly. Our guests of honour, was David Rawlinson, President of the LTA who, next day also took the opportunity to visit Sunderland, Boldon and Hartlepool clubs and hit a few tennis balls with them.

2019 saw Durham & Cleveland achieve 3 North Regional Award winners. The Community Award went to A690, a small charity which meets the needs of disadvantaged young people. Lifetime Achievement was won by John Taylor, Hutton Rugby TC and Education award went to Dame Dorothy Primary School Sunderland, who put tennis at the core of its PE curriculum. All three were shortlisted for a National Award and to everyone's delight A690 became a National winner and received a surprise cheque for £5k.



Well done to all who were nominated for any of the 10 award categories, their efforts in supporting, promoting and ensuring our game of tennis continues to thrive and grow are to be applauded.

Working with Jo Cunliffe, women's and girl's tennis continued to be fully supported with various girl's master classes. To stress the importance given to this part of the game, Vicky Evans was appointed our She Rallies Ambassador. It is hoped this will result in a much-needed increase in participation of women and girls in all aspects involved with tennis.

Congratulations to Tennis World and Nigel Garton for all their efforts in providing the first Padel Club in the North which is proving to be a highly successful venture. So much so that Nigel's workload at the club is taking up all of his time and he regrets having to stand down from the County Exec. The County are indebted to Nigel for his work, expertise and support over the years, but I'm sure we will still be able to call on his knowledge in the future.

My thanks to all our clubs, who with support from our Executive team & LTA team successfully achieved all 6 required registration standards. Well done.

Disability tennis is being supported and encouraged in a number of clubs and schools and Blind tennis has produced a World Champion with Rosie Pybus winning her crown in 2019.

More than 100 Hearing Impaired children took part in our North East tournament with two players being invited to take part in our Annual County Closed Championship

Finally, my sincere thanks to the members of the Executive for their invaluable contribution and hard work during 2019, and for a further 7 months in 2020 during the Corvid crisis. As you all know, the last 6 months have been tough, and thanks go to Anne, Tony Viv and Christine for guiding players, coaches and clubs into how to interpret Government and LTA rulings on what was or wasn't allowed, and Alan for his guidance on the safeguarding front, to Paul Bennett and Laurie Haines & Jo Cunliffe (LTA staff) for their invaluable support. Also, my thanks to all our sponsors for their invaluable financial support which have become vital in the running of county business.

Finally, I must on behalf of the county express our sincere thanks to Anne Clayton who stepped down as LTA Councillor after 16 years' service. New LTA guidelines dictate a maximum length of Councillor service and Anne was way over that limit. She provided an outstanding link between county, Region and LTA nationally and ensured D&C's view point was well aired at national level. Anne spent many hours at meetings forging necessary links with all the right people at the highest level. Anne's passion and desire to make sure D&C is held in high regard and recognised nationally is unerring.

We are therefore fortunate and our thanks go to Viv Wilson who become our LTA Councillor in 2020. Viv's knowledge of the county and LTA will undoubtedly be to our advantage.

We are, with restrictions, back playing tennis again but it could be a while before normality returns to our game.

John Schofield

President D&C LTA