

STOCK TENNIS CLUB

NEWSLETTER No. 34 – OCTOBER 2010

Message from the Chairman

In this, my first note as Chairman, I thought it would be a good idea to look back briefly on the past few months at Stock Tennis Club and rather more importantly look forward to the optimistically termed "challenges and opportunities" facing the club in the future. The Summer Leagues have now finished with STC putting in a good performance across all teams. The Mens 1 team continue to play in the top division and are reaping the benefits of a younger squad (the ever young Neil Haynes has gone from being the youngest member of the team to the eldest in just a few short seasons). The Ladies will be fielding two teams in the Winter season and so there promises to be healthy competition for places. The mixed doubles teams have had successful seasons also and remain a great way to play competitive doubles tennis.

The changing face of the Men's 1 team was reflected in the Summer Tournament where Simon Hardie triumphed in an epic battle against Tom Partridge. Both players still had plenty left in the tank for the final 3rd set and on this showing will be difficult to separate in the years to come. The Ladies final was one of the best I have seen in my time at the club; you can read the write up below, whilst the mixed doubles showcased another young talent breaking through the ranks, no not Lynne Davis but Rob Watkins. So far the youth have grabbed the headlines, but Ian Hardie and Bob Semple both proved there is life in old dogs yet (and that they can learn new tricks or something) by slugging out a thrilling 3 setter in the Vets tourney. Congratulations to all the winners, finalists and everyone that took part - I hope you enjoyed the chance to play some singles and competitive doubles as much as I did (although not when I was getting trounced by the youth - maybe next year the cut off for the vets should be 25?).

Away from the courts there has been plenty going on. Thanks to Simon Hardie we now have a new court booking system which is on display in the clubhouse - this should make it easier for all members to find court time. The club have been involved in the local community, offering prizes at local charity events with the dual aim of doing some good and also spreading the good word about STC. Many thanks to everyone who helped in the annual club tidy up day - the courts and surrounding area were looking great for finals day. We also have a facebook page and are working on a website - the idea is that all your facebook friends will see the group and join up - it's free publicity, spread the word! Lastly many thanks as always to Bob and Anne Semple for hosting the Summer Party - I think I can safely say a good time was had by all.

I promised a glimpse of the future in my opening sentence but as I have rabbit-ed on about the past a glimpse is all you will be getting. Needless to say there are several important decisions about the club coming up in the near future - not least of which is the court replacement and how to attract enough new members to ensure the club has a lifespan beyond the next 5-10 years. The club's AGM will be taking place before the year end and I urge all of you to attend and have a say about the future direction of the club. The club exists for one reason - to provide a place where locals can play social and competitive tennis at a reasonable cost - this is your club, there really is no club without you and so I urge you all to attend the AGM and get your point across if you think we should be doing something differently.

Looking forward to seeing you all on the courts

James

Captains

Only three captains have sent in reports – poor show folks

Mens 1.

With one game left to play at the time of going to press, Men's 1 are clinging on to top division status. I am told by our well informed fixtures secretary that we need a win to stay up. We lost the corresponding away fixture narrowly 5-4 although we had to concede three sets due to a shortage of available manpower and some - shall we call it - "misunderstandings" regarding squad allocations. Overall, it has been a challenge this season as a reorganisation of the division reduced the number of teams from the bottom section and thereby reduced the number of teams we might beat. Tom and Dean have led admirably from the front with Simon and James providing good support. Our third pair, often referred to at Stock by the single adjoined epithet of "Briananneil" and by the opposing team as "those two old geezers we ought get all three sets off", have won a few when they have played (Brian's two wheeled exploits and resulting aches and pains kept him out of the early part of the season). Rob Watkins, Bob Semple, Mac Partridge, Paul Fordham and Ian Hardie all deserve a mention in despatches for stepping into the breach when called upon. By the time you read this our fate will have been sealed. If we do go down I will lay the blame firmly on the lack of beer drunk after matches which continues to be an issue!

Mens 2

It was a messy year, with more incomplete games than usual. Old Brentwood wreaked havoc in the league generally and both home and away we were subject to last minute cancellations. We also ran into the difficulty of having Mens 1 (needing 6 players) and Mens 2 on the same night, particularly in the middle of the holiday period. Each of us was forced to forego a game to enable the other team to have a full complement. In our case we ended up conceding a match against Writtle, against whom we would have won points. That being said, having panicked that we might risk relegation we came fourth in

the final calculations - The winter season has got off to a fine start with an 8-0 win at Writtle.

Ladies 1

With the nights already staring to draw in - that tells us that the summer season must be coming to a close. With just 1 match outstanding we hope to wrap up the season in a strong promotion position. Out of 11 matches played we have won 8, drawn 1, and lost 2. Many thanks to the 'team' - Denise, Cathy, Helen and Judy - for playing so well all season.

Lynne

Finals Day

We have two detailed reports of finals [Ed - other matches may have been equally as tense but you need to send me these things]

Ladies 1 Final

This year's final saw Lynne Davis take on Denise Watkins in what promised to be a keenly contested affair. Both competitors have proven quality at this level and a healthy rivalry has developed over the past few years – the crowd expected a battle and were not to be disappointed. The first few games provided a glimpse of what was to come; Lynne quickly settling into a rhythm of solid, powerful groundstrokes which forced errors from the Watkins backhand. Such was the quality of Lynne's hitting to the lines that she only registered a handful of unforced errors in taking the first set 6-3. At the changeover you could hear the nervous murmurings from the crowd – was this to be Lynne's year? Could Denise find a way past her fearsome forehand? What time was the BBQ starting? This tension seemed to transmit onto court and the second set was a much different affair to the first. Denise refused to give up, running down every ball and tightening up her own groundstrokes; backhands that flew long in the first were kissing the lines and Lynne's ever reliable forehand started to show signs of strain. Denise took the second set 6-3 propelled on by an air of inevitability present from the first game.

The third was always going to be a close set and as so often at this level, the match would be decided by one or two key points. The final's pivot point came at 4-4, 30-30 when Lynne came out on top after a long rally, the best of the match, which showcased both player's quality and commitment. Lynne went on to break and then serve out the match with typical professionalism. As the pair embraced over the net you could tell that although Lynne had won this particular battle there will be many more to come and the rivalry had just been taken up a notch.



Did Tom want to be in the photos?

Veteran's Final

Away from the show court, the crowd has they bothered to show up would have been entertained by a close fought match – occasionally spectators wandered over from the BBQ area but the lure of a second sausage was too strong and they left again. There was no Nastase humour, no McEnroe outbursts at the umpire, just top quality tennis from two long-standing members of the club. Hardie, the younger by an unknown number of years, is unbeaten in this tournament since its inception but Semple was in to his stride immediately, winning his own service to 15 and the breaking to 30. But Iain broke straight back. At 3-3, with Bob serving, Iain converted his second breakpoint. But Bob wasn't through. The next game was a belter: four deuces with Iain saving two breakpoints before holding for 5-3. Iain then broke again for a 6-3 first set.

Had Bob given his best and would Iain coast through the second set? Nope.

Bob came out and broke to 15 and then held his own serve to love. The Semple backhand was as smooth as ever, and starting to get on top of the famous Hardie slice serve, but Iain broke back at the next opportunity for 2-2. But Bob was on fire and broke again and then held to love again for 4-2. He broke again for 5-2. Could he serve out for the 2nd set? No – Iain

is renowned for his never say die attitude to which the court fences can testify as he chased many a lost cause over the years!! He broke back and then held to love for 4-5. Another epic game followed – four deuces, Iain had three breakpoints but Bob converted his 2nd set point.

Third set – was this to be a tie-break in lieu of the set? This had been in the rules in year one but it was felt that it hadn't been continued, so a full set it was, but if we got to 6-6 a standard tie-break would be played. Energy levels were still high but could they be maintained? The first four games went with serve. Bob then played a couple of cracking passing shots to break to 15. But Iain wasn't done: he broke straight back to 15 and then held for 4-3. Bob was starting to flag but was summoning up energy from somewhere – a suggestion of compulsory drug testing for finalists will be discussed at the AGM. But Iain could see the winning line and charged the net successfully to break for 5-3. And he served out for a 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 victory. Great tennis chaps.



On Finals Day we also enjoyed: -
Mens Singles – Simon Hardie bt Tom Partridge 4-6 6-1 7-6
Mens Doubles – Tom Partridge & Bryan Boddy bt James Fordham & Graham Preston 6-3 6-3
Mixed Doubles – Simon Hardie & Judy Croot by Rob Watkins & Lynne Davis 7-6 6-1
Ladies Doubles – Lynne Davis & Sue Scott by Cathy Winterflood & Anne Semple (no-one can remember!!)

Other Finals' photos are at the end of the newsletter

There was no photographic evidence of Bob receiving his runners-up award.

Unfortunately none of the junior finals took place on the day due to unavailability of finalists or outstanding matches. They have since been played.

Boys U11 Nathan Fry bt Daniel Cripps - They played best of 3 sets to 10 points Nathan winning 10-2, 10-2.

Boys U18 Sam Chesworth bt Nick Halford 6-1 6-2. (Sam successfully retained his title)

Girls U18 Hayley Mitchell bt Katie Bottomley 6-4 6-3

Anne & Bob's Summer Party ... (Or should I say Ladies Snooker Marathon ...!!)

Anne and Bob again held the post finals summer party. As is custom, the lawn was neatly mowed, the tables & chairs were nicely laid out around the garden and the Pimms was ready on arrival...! Anne had prepared a great chicken curry and a bean stew as a vegetarian alternative. A variety of desserts were provided by those who attended. (The smarty chocolate cake seemed the favourite as it had all gone by the time I got there). The meal was finished off with cheese and coffee. The food was great and appreciated by all.

The weather was kind and we were able to sit out for most of the afternoon. It was great to get together again, off court, and have a general natter. Later in the afternoon the men decided to venture indoors for a quiet game of snooker. This was followed by a ladies doubles which was, to say the least, impressive. I've never seen such a high scoring game (penalties), with such tension lasting so long..... (I fell asleep). Anyway, there were lots of laughs and everyone seemed to have a good time.

On behalf of all those who attended, I'd like to thank Anne and Bob for putting on such a good show. It's always a great afternoon and enjoyed by all those who attend.

(Anon)

Fixtures Secretary

Summer Season

Stock has had a very good summer of Tennis. We had all 8 teams in the Brentwood / Chelmsford league. League tables will be sent out ASAP. Results can be found on the Billericay tennis club site and <http://www.cdltf.co.uk/> I won't know the official results for a few weeks after the season has finished.

Winter Season - started on October 1st 2010. We've got 6 teams in different divisions. 2 Mens, 2 Ladies, 2 Mixed. There is info for members in the club house. I have created an easy to use court booking system for the club.

I hope all teams the best of success in the Winter Season.

Simon