

## **NLTA AGM 2024**

### **2024 Chair's Report**

2024 has been a busy year. Many thanks go to all the management committee, many of whom are here tonight, for their commitment and time spent working to improve and grow tennis in Northants.

Our sub-committee structure has developed and working in smaller groups with specific aims has proved highly productive.

The Governance subcommittee worked tirelessly through the LTA framework and by Autumn ensured that we are 100% compliant. A great team effort for all involved. Thank-you.

2024 saw the Performance and Competition Subcommittee established, and has already made significant progress across its remit including growing seniors tennis and establishing a new seniors organiser role, and adding more mini-red opportunities through the winter.

After a few hurdles along the way we managed to secure a Participation lead, and Leo Tutt has the experience and knowledge to really help us grow our tennis community. Although he has only been working with us from late 2024, Leo has quickly established many relationships with many clubs and has plans with each of those to boost participation in the months to come.

The County Closed moved to a new venue, at Northampton County LTC and saw adult events, for the first time in quite a few years, alongside the many different junior age events. There was fierce competition and a great atmosphere. Thanks to Laura and Bridget for such a smoothly run event. I know there are plans for even more events this year so watch this space!

Last year we explained that we would like to review the structure of our organisation. At our club forum, clubs had the opportunity to ask questions and find out more about it. There is a report on this later, but I would like to thank Richard Johns for all his diligent work on this and Stuart Farquhar for his time and expertise.

Our workforce development programme is continuing to deliver training to potential new coaches, with more candidates already signed up for this year. Thanks to Justin Chacksfield who has steered the new coaches along the way.

## **NLTA AGM 2024**

### **SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2024**

A change of Regional Manager was not too helpful for our county. A couple of clubs were targeted for “unannounced visits”. One club had immense difficulty in receiving information for registering and others were at one stage deciding whether or not to register. In all there were five visits and one that had to be cancelled, but all passed.

Every club was contacted to sign any of their 14-24 year olds onto the YOUNG PERSON’S WELFARE AMBASSADOR 12 MONTH PROGRAMME. This is for young people to gain confidence, improve their confidence in public speaking, listening to their peers and children with help from their club welfare officer. This also helps towards their university or job applications- very similar to the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. A safeguarding survey was issued nationally and many youngsters were unaware of who to contact if necessary. Please ensure that the Welfare Officer picture and contact number are well signposted.

On a VERY positive note we had a good report from Jon Thursfield (our newly appointed regional manager in May 2024) who came to our County Closed Competition in August. My thanks go to Bridget and Laura who had EVERYTHING required to have the competition hit the 100% result. He was particularly impressed with the notices, signing in sheets, daily welcome meetings, enough supervision and hardly any problems on or off the court.

There were a few minor safeguarding issues this year that were dealt with quickly within the clubs and a couple of other cases that needed escalating to the LTA team.

We are now in the Central and East Area, Jon has now left as of January 21 st and our new Regional Manager is Melissa Miller who will be informing us of the visits she hopes to do in 2025. Some will be unannounced where she will just turn up and check for policies, telephone numbers and officials. Please ensure these are all updated – all information is on the County and LTA website. There are quarterly meetings a year and a conference in October all on zoom or teams with current information. Our representative at Northamptonshire Sport Vickie Merrick has also left, her replacement is Lijana Kasiziu. She will also be contacting all the clubs to offer help and advice if needed within our county.

To make it a hattrick I am also resigning. I would like to say a big thankyou to Carol who intercepts many issues including safeguarding and with new personnel onboard in both associations I hope Northants continue to have less complaints and cases similar to this year for the new County Safeguarding Officer.

Rosemary Swallow

## **NLTA AGM 2024**

### **MEN'S OVER 70s REPORT**

We have had another enjoyable year of seniors' county tennis, but although we have had some close matches, I am afraid the results have not been good. We have won one rubber in all but one of the matches we have played thanks to our star player Brian Perry. We have, however, come up against some tough opposition, including a former captain of England and some other national players. We have had some competitive tennis played in a good spirit and we always enjoy the match tea afterwards.

2025 promises to be a better year as both Stuart Wetherell and Mike Breslin both turn 70 during the year, which will greatly strengthen our squad and with them playing along with Brian and the others in the squad making up the rest of the team, I would hope and expect that we will have a better set of results during the coming year. As we all get older and more prone to injuries, it bodes well that we will have a larger squad of 8 players to choose the team from.

Charles Henley - Captain

**NLTA AGM 2024**  
**MEN'S OVER 55s REPORT**

This was our third highly successful year in a row. After the disappointment of not being promoted to Group 1 last year when the rules were changed to allow only one team to be promoted we were determined to put this behind us and achieve promotion this year. The teams in our Group were Lincolnshire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Durham and Cleveland and Derbyshire. The players who represented the County this season were Neil Shorrocks, Philip Watson, Ian Masters, Jeff Servant, Richard Smith and Brian Perry.

The first match was against Lincolnshire. This was a very close match with the deciding rubber being won 11-9 in the Champions tiebreak for a 3-2 victory. The next match was a more comfortable 4-1 win against Cheshire. We then entertained Shropshire, who had come down from Group 1 last year, and came away with a hard fought victory 3-2. The next match was against Durham and Cleveland after a long drive to Sunderland, they were the only other unbeaten team and a victory was needed to ensure promotion. We were 2-1 up after the first round and needed to win one of the doubles, this was gained by Ian and Jeff to give us a 3-2 victory after a very long and tiring day. The final match was away to Derbyshire and we managed to come through 4-1. We hope five wins will ensure promotion to Group 1 next year to play the strongest teams in the country which will be a great challenge.

Statistics at the end of the season saw Phil win 8 out of 10, Neil win 7 out of 10, Ian win 5 out of 10, Jeff 4 out of 6, and Richard 1 out of 2. Brian who helped me out at the last minute and usually represents the 70s team took both matches he played to Champions tiebreaks, a commendable team effort.

Neil Shorrocks - Captain

## NLTA AGM 2024

### MEN'S OVER 45s REPORT

Our team for the year was Giuliano Labban, Christian Rostlund, Spencer Coates and Paul White.

We came 3rd out of 4 teams.

It was a good season with close games and 2 very strong teams Derbyshire and Gloucestershire in the league.

Paul and Spencer played singles and Giuliano and Christian were our doubles pair.

Our first match was away against Derbyshire. It was a tough one and they had their strongest team out and we lost 1-4. Giuliano and Christian picked up 1 rubber.

Our 2nd match was at home against Isle of Man. We won 4-1. Great team effort by all. Paul and Spencer lost the doubles on a championship tie break in a very close match.

Our last match was at home against Gloucestershire and we lost 1-4. Giuliano and Christian picked up our 1 rubber. They both have had a good season playing for us this year, picking up rubbers in every match.

Gloucestershire went on to win the league, only dropping 1 rubber the whole season.

I'd like to say thank you to NLTA for your support and well played to my players and thanks for your commitment.

Paul White - Captain

## NLTA AGM 2024

### MEN'S OVER 35s REPORT

An enjoyable long weekend in Eastbourne for the Men's 35s team where the weather was kind, and the courts playing as good as ever. Isle of Man were beaten comfortably by all in our group, but great 3-2 wins against Cumbria and Northumberland secured Northants promotion.

The team competed really well on the singles court, but it was our doubles play that really stood out. The team had good strength in depth, which caused both doubles pairs to pick up crucial wins on both days.

Onto 2025, we welcome 2 new additions to the team in Charlie Swallow and Alex Ward. With these boys hopefully available, I'm hoping for back to back promotions 🏆

Thanks to NLTA for your continued support and hoping for a great 2025 for Northants tennis.

Team:

Dean Gayton (c)  
Andy Palliser  
Barry Wilson  
Simon Gallo  
Christian Rostlund

Dean Gayton – Captain



## NLTA AGM 2024

### MEN'S COUNTY CUP REPORT (WINTER)

Northants Men competed in Group 5 at Tipton in November.

The team selected was Alex Ward, Joe Tyler, Peter Whight, Ryan Stinton, Angel Angelov, Kacper Laskowski, Andy Palliser, Josh Golding and non-playing Captain Mark Taylor.

On day 1 v Dorset Northamptonshire gained a 6-3 win after being 3 all after the singles thanks to wins from Joe at 1 Kacper at 5 and a hard fought 3 set win by Andy at 6. The doubles proved comfortable winning all 3 matches from the pairings of Joe/Peter Angel/Kacper and Josh/Andy.

On day 2 v Sussex we were strengthened by the arrival of Alex Ward who with the help of singles wins also from Joe, Ryan, Angel and Kacper along with doubles wins from Joe/Alex and Josh/Andy secured a 7-2 win to take us into a final day showdown with Shropshire to decide promotion

On day 3 v Shropshire Northamptonshire started strongly with wins from Kacper and Ryan before continued success from Alex and Joe put Northants 4-2 up going into the doubles. With doubles wins from Joe and Alex and Kacper and Andy Northants won Group 5 to gain promotion. A fantastic end to the year for Northants Men following on the back of a good summer campaign and great to see younger players Kacper, Angel and Ryan getting opportunities to represent Northants.

Mark Taylor - Captain

## NLTA AGM 2024

### MEN'S SUMMER COUNTY CUP REPORT

Three veterans of the Northamptonshire tennis scene briefly sat earnestly in debate while overseeing the machinations of a food bank in the town on Friday morning.

Word had filtered back from Eastbourne that things were going unexpectedly well in the LTA Summer Championships... It was shocking news!

Discussing the unlikely scenario of the county men having already registered two victories in the first four days in Group 1 for the first time in living memory, and quite probably history, one of them summed up the occasion with equal doses of wit and brevity.

“Arise, Sir Mark Taylor!” he said.

No such honour is likely to be forthcoming for the county men's captain, but that was never the intention. Comparisons of David versus Goliath are not unfitting given the achievement, so a medal of some description would not be inappropriate, or at least a little recognition.

All that is before anyone considers Taylor's 30 years at the helm, which wouldn't ordinarily be good for anyone's mental, or indeed physical health.

One time Northamptonshire linchpin Richard Ward, whose son Alex was in the line-up, and who now lives in the Borders, was at the forefront of those showering praise on Taylor and their crew.

In offering congratulations, he said: “You have made people think about Northants tennis in a different way,” adding: “the county had never won a match in Group 1 for 70-odd years.”

Prior to last week, Northants had only ever spent two summers in the top division, in 1954 and 2001, Taylor steering them there on the latter occasion.

A 6-3 win over Hertfordshire on Tuesday and a bad-tempered, fiery 5-4 success at the expense of Kent on Thursday ensured Northants will once again be playing in Group 1 in 2025. On other days there were losses to East of Scotland

(2-7), Surrey (2-7) and North of Scotland (1-5). Surrey retained their title, winning on all five days.

“We (Northants) have finished fourth in the country which was an amazing effort from the guys,” said Taylor.

Strength in depth has never been a strong suit for Northants but as Taylor readily points out, it is all about the players who choose to commit to the cause. A certain outmoded sense of loyalty binds them all together.

“Most of these guys are in work, so not only are they giving up a week’s salary but holiday as well,” said Taylor.

Injuries, aches and pains inevitably take their toll on what could in theory ask each player to commit to 45 sets of men’s doubles spread over five days. Of course, this never quite materialises but it is necessary to have back-up cover close at hand, especially when the venue is a good three-and-a half-hour drive away.

Taylor was rocked in the preparation by news that Charlie Swallow, one of his mainstays over the years, had needed an operation after damaging pectoral muscles playing cricket.

Although there was tinkering to the line-ups down the week, the regular pairings were: Joe Tyler/Jack Haworth, Kyle Rae/James Smith and Alex Ward/Max Graham.

Jakob Bonnett, who was 18 on Christmas Eve and who is off to the USA in September, filled in at intervals, especially on the Tuesday against Hertfordshire when Smith stepped down after the first round, suffering the after-effects of a sapping illness.

Bonnett proceeded to team up with Rae, helping to win the next two matches.

The opening day’s 7-2 loss against East of Scotland saw wins for Haworth/Tyler and Rae/Smith but three match tie-breaks were lost 10-7 in the first round which set the tone for the day.

Then came the Hertfordshire win when a reverse of fortune saw five match tie-breaks won, Haworth/Tyler and Ward/Graham collecting two wins apiece during the course of the day.

Bonnett/Rae and Ward/Graham each bagged one win against Surrey on Wednesday as a consolation before the titanic tussle with Kent, the only county who failed to get a win all week. With the scores tied at 4-4, Rae/Smith grabbed the decisive rubber.

Northants could still have been relegated going into the final day which ended with a 5-1 loss to North of Scotland. However, Surrey's win against Hertfordshire confirmed Northants would stay up.

Mark Taylor - Captain

## **NLTA AGM 2024**

### **NLTL LEAGUE REPORT**

- The NLTL committee itself has grown to 9 committee member, consisting of volunteers from Northampton County LTC, Dallington LTC , Northampton LTC, Rushmere TC, Abington LTC, Crick and West Haddon TC.
- The NLTL is committed to remaining an independent body of volunteers.
- There are currently 24 tennis clubs who make up the NLTL.
- The leagues (summer and winter) continue to grow and with it, the number of competitive matches which are played within the leagues.
- The league is currently in discussion with an additional two new clubs who wish to join the NLTL, thus increasing participation and match play further.

## **NLTA AGM 2024**

### **Ladies Over 35s Report 2024**

After gaining promotion in a very wet and short format in 2023 we knew going in to 2024 it could be tough. The team was Aimie, Tracey, Sarah, Robyn and myself.

Day 1 was rain affected, so our match against Lincolnshire was shortened to 3 rubbers and completed on day 2. We lost both singles, one very tight match, but won the consolation doubles. It was a shame we didn't get to play the other doubles.

Match 2 against Buckinghamshire started late, the singles players proved too strong, and although we got one doubles win we lost 4-1.

Day 3 was against Norfolk, where the singles and doubles strength of our opposition proved to be too great as we lost 3-0.

Everyone tried their best and the support from all to everyone was fantastic.  
Back to Group 5 for 2025!

Suzanne Clarke – Captain

# NLTA AGM 2024

## JUNIOR TENNIS REPORT

### NLTA team results

	18	16	14	12	11	10	9	8
<b>B</b> 12 counties	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>		2 <sup>nd</sup>		
<b>O</b> County cup	rel to 5		No OL/TD 6/6	No OL 5/6	no team	No WI 5/5	5/5	6/6
<b>Y</b> Lionel cox				8 <sup>th</sup>		9 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>S</b> Inter-county								No AF 10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>G</b> 12 counties	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>		no team		
<b>I</b> County cup	Stay 4		3/6	No EG/SA 4/6	No EG (1) 3/6	no team	4/5	5/6
<b>R</b> Lionel cox				No SA (1) 5 <sup>th</sup>		no team	8 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>L</b> <b>S</b> Inter-county								5 <sup>th</sup>

### 12counties 2023-24

- U18 boys 2<sup>nd</sup>
- U18 girls 2<sup>nd</sup>
- U16 girls 2<sup>nd</sup>
- U16 boys 4<sup>th</sup>
- U14 boys 3<sup>rd</sup>
- U14 girls 2<sup>nd</sup>
- U12 girls 2<sup>nd</sup>
- U12 boys 3<sup>rd</sup>
- U10 girls no team
- U10 boys 2<sup>nd</sup>

## **County cups 2024**

U18 boys – relegated from group 4  
U18 girls – stayed in group 4  
U9 boys – 5/5  
U9 girls – 4/5  
U8 boys 6/6  
U8 girls 5/6  
U14 boys – 6/6 – No Oskar, No Tanishq  
U14 girls – 3/6  
U10 girls – no team  
U10 boys – 5/5 – No Wiktor  
U11 boys no team  
U11 girls – 3/6 – No Esme day 1  
U12 girls 4/6 – No Sophia, No Esme  
U12 boys 5/6 – No Oskar

## **U8 INTER-COUNTY 2024**

BOYS 10/10 – No Alfie  
GIRLS 5/10

## **Lionel Cox – 10 counties regional event 2024**

U9 boys 8th  
U9 girls 8th  
U10 boys 9<sup>th</sup>  
U10 girls no team  
U12 boys 8<sup>th</sup> – No Oskar  
U12 girls 5<sup>th</sup> - No Sophia day 2

## **Junior Report 2024**

Numbers in County Training generally continue to be pretty healthy. The county girls' teams have generally been stronger than the boys for some reason this year? We did well across the board in the 12 counties events, but found it very tough to field competitive teams, especially on the boys side for county cups. For a variety of reasons we seemed to have our number 1 players absent for many county cup events (5 out of 12), which had a real impact for the teams. We have adapted our eligibility criteria and offered support for players at national level to encourage them to continue to represent Northants whenever possible. Early signs suggest this might be helping.



At an individual level special mentions to Oskar Laskowski, Leah and Tegan Bush who are all involved in national age group activity, Kacper Laskowski, Joshua Wright, Sophia Agius and Esme Gallon who have places at regional player development centres, and Olivia Samoila, Alfie Felstead and Kamilah Djida who have all been involved in regional training camps for U9/10

More concerning for the future is the general level of our minis coming through isn't great (and this year we are very low on numbers on the girls side for the u8's). We have introduced an indoor county series of mini-red events and put on more mini-red county sessions to help tackle this. We also ought to note that two unfillable team gaps exist in the programme post-covid (u12 boys and u11 girls).

Our performance plan, has now seen the role out of parent education sessions to u8/9 and 10 age groups (which has seen an improvement of competition programmes followed by our minis), 2 of our county captains supporting delivery of regional training camps for their professional development, and 6 workshops delivered to 7 aspiring county captains, who have taken up vice-captaincy/captaincy roles this year. This group of team leaders will be enhanced by the introduction of a local level 2 qualification course in the autumn of 2024, the benefits of which we should see in 2025.

Justin Chacksfield

## NLTA AGM 2024

### NLTA EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) REPORT 2024.

Northants Tennis is fully committed to playing its part in **opening tennis up**. We will do this by building a culture of everyday **inclusion** and operating in a way which enables, encourages and values greater **diversity** and more **equitable** outcomes for all, with the intention that our sport and our Association reflect the diversity of the communities around us.

**Inclusion** for all is our goal, it is a culture in which everybody can feel comfortable and confident to be themselves, no matter their visible or hidden differences. **Diversity** without **inclusion** means that people from more diverse backgrounds may feel excluded.

#### Where are we now?

- We have developed our own 3-year EDI county plan.
- As part of this, we have developed our EDI policy to reflect our current thinking.
- The EDI strategic lead is in post.
- All committee members and wider post holders have completed their online EDI training.
- The NLTA County EDI website has been updated to enable us to provide up to date information, advice and guidance.
- We appointed a new Open Court Lead, Tom Stevenson, his responsibility is to oversee the Open Plan Programmes and to provide data to the LTA which then supports our county funding.

#### Open Court update by Tom Stevenson

- The Open Court 2024 programme has seen incredible growth and success across various initiatives, reflecting the commitment to making tennis more inclusive and accessible to all.

#### Walking Tennis Expansion

- Great work has been done by **Rushmere** and **Heyford Tennis**, both of which have established large and thriving walking tennis programmes. These initiatives have provided an excellent opportunity for players of all abilities to engage in the sport in a more accessible and social format. A new group has started at **Middleton Cheyney**.

#### The Cube Disability Engagement

- The Cube Disability has made significant strides in tennis participation, with nearly **100 individuals actively engaged in weekly**

**tennis activities.** This remarkable level of involvement highlights the impact of inclusive programming and structured sessions tailored for individuals with disabilities.

#### Adaptive Padel at Brampton Heath Golf Club

- A new and exciting development in adaptive tennis has been the introduction of **Adaptive Padel** sessions at **Brampton Heath Golf Club**. These sessions are taking full advantage of the club's **four brand-new Padel courts**, providing a fresh and dynamic way for individuals with varying needs to engage in racket sports.

#### Tennis Leadership Courses

- The **Tennis Leadership courses** have been an overwhelming success, empowering young leaders with additional needs to develop skills and confidence in coaching and leading sessions. Schools such as **Billing Brook, Purple Oaks, and Northgate** have played a crucial role in nurturing young leaders, ensuring that the next generation of inclusive tennis coaches is well-equipped and motivated.

- Pickleball remains popular with groups at **Dallington** and **Towcester Leisure Centre**.
- The Disability Inclusive **Sports Club** continues, as does other local initiatives including **Fun Days, Have a Go Days**, increased **wheelchair user** sessions, **sensory tennis** and much more.

The progress made in 2024 has set a strong foundation for the continued growth of inclusive tennis and increased participation across the county. A huge thank you to all clubs, schools, and organisations involved in making this year such a success!

Caroline Bilbie – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Lead

Bursaries are still available for those wanting to upgrade their coaching qualification and for those interested in officiating.

Padel arrived in the county in the summer and more courts are on the way. Pickleball is enjoyed at several different venues, and walking tennis is established in a couple of clubs. So alternative versions of tennis appear a popular choice to encourage participation for people from a range of backgrounds and different experiences. Something we hope to build on moving forward.

Again all our county teams have represented us with their usual determination and effort. From our mini-red players to our senior teams. Well done. Team reports will follow, however a special mention to Mark Taylor's Men's Team who secured their spot in Division 1 for a second successive season. Congratulations!

We look forward to 2025 with anticipation and the belief that we can continue to grow tennis in Northants and get more people picking up a racket more often.

Suzanne Clarke NLTA Chair