



Essex Squash & Racketball Association

ANNUAL REPORT

July 2024

Annual Report Overview– Dave Neller

Apart from the economic pressures that have influenced facilities decisions to ditch courts, it has long been my suspicion that the decline in squash is also as a result of the lack of marketing and promotion of the sport outside of existing players. The game does not lend itself well as a spectator sport unless you play and understand it, and hence has not received the media attention it deserves. Part of our goal in Essex is to try and increase awareness through our refreshed media platforms. The new website and social media networks that are now in place handled by Tony Bickley are picking up momentum, I would encourage using and sharing as much as possible to keep them vibrant and spread the word. Tony is very open to any suggestions to improve or add content, create groups etc.

Similarly, the new membership packages England Squash are aiming to launch mid 2024 will provide an opportunity to not only engage directly with current players but also those outside of the squash scene.

Essex will mandate the new ES membership for County league and Inter-County squad players, which is the £15 'Play' level detailed below but encourage full 'Compete' membership for the benefits it brings. Also, the benefit to County is 20% rebate from every player and club affiliated, which will go towards development and support county team costs.

Club - Affiliation costs are £75 per court capped at 6 courts.

New player packages

Digital (free) – (A great opportunity to engage with individuals outside of the squash community) • Exclusive content and communications from England Squash and our partners

- Access to digital tools supporting players and fans.

Support (£10)

- All 'Digital' membership benefits
- Early access and discounts on tickets for major PSA events in England plus British National Championships
- 10% discount on squash equipment at PDH Sports
- Access to the digital version of Squash Player Magazine

Play (£15) - (ESRA mandate for County League and County Squads)

- All 'Support' membership benefits
- Eligibility for county leagues and competitions (depending on local league requirements)
- Liability insurance to give you peace of mind on court.
- Additional discounts for Squash Player Magazine and RacketPal Premium
- Free tube of 3 squash balls (with a £15 purchase on Dunlop kit or equipment from PDH Sports)

Compete (£25) – (Recommended)

- All 'Play' membership benefits
- Free access to archive SQUASHTV content
- A market-leading discount on annual SQUASHTV subscriptions
- Access to Diamond Club rewards and discount scheme

Youth Members (£15) - Will receive all benefits available in the 'Compete' category, as will Coaches Club members (in addition to their existing Coaches Club membership benefits).

Regarding County Squads, we still have some work to do, both team selection and funding have been issues during the past few years. We have looked at several other counties, and all are different but have similar issues as to how much they can afford to fund. Essex has always tried to be fair and cover main expenses plus a small level of compensation for professional players. Virtually all monies from league fees go towards funding support of county squads. Our latest proposal and proposed levels of county squad funding will to be discussed and voted on later.



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We piloted [3] new series of tournaments that we called the Essex Cups (Sanderson Cup, Woodhouse & Webster Trophies). Hopefully, you either took part or watched the inaugural event and the great night of finals held in April hosted by Woodford Wells, I must thank Jonathan Caton and Mike Hegarty for the work they did to make these tournaments a success. Apart from a few small tweaks we plan to run these again in similar format through 2024/2025.

The Essex Closed was run very successfully at Lexdon again, I would like to thank Mike Hegarty and his team for all their hard work, and of course the sponsors for making this another successful tournament. At the time of writing this the structure for the next County Closed is under discussion and will be decided soon.

The results from the Inter-County squads are detailed in the County report, a special thanks to all the captains who worked hard to field squads, and to those who gave up their weekends to play. We also had a couple of players called up to represent England – Anthony Savage in the o'40's and Nigel Bacon in the o'60's, so congratulations to them. The juniors also did well and successes are covered in the junior report.

As you should be aware Essex is a member of the London & South East Regional Forum (LSERF), which encompasses London, Kent, Sussex, Surrey & Middlesex and accounts for about 25% of the UK's squash facilities. LSERF is now the only successful and functioning forum in the UK and has full England Squash support. We have been focusing quite a lot on London and the bordering boroughs, with some exposure at large events. We have also achieved our goal of getting 16 different borough teams to enter the London Youth Games. The focus is now building on this success and on promoting squash in the lead up to the 2028 Olympics.

From the ESRA committee perspective, we are here to manage the activities you as players want in the county, this includes the county leagues, inter-county squads, junior programs, development, and county competitions. In addition, we must constitutionally manage certain aspects of the county governance, like safeguarding, accounts, AGM, communication etc. As you know we are a voluntary organisation, but we try where possible to act upon issues that may arise within the squash community. We are very open to ideas, and welcome helpful advice or volunteers to take on some of the more challenging items, such as the county closed. Essex Squash needs your support, so please help us with the challenging times ahead, especially when it comes to the new England Squash affiliation program.

I would like to say a special thanks to Chris Vine for his many years of dedication to promoting and growing squash not only in the county but also for his work in LSERF which Essex is a part of. Chris is stepping down as Essex Development Officer this year but going forward Chris has set up a 4-person development team which he will give more detail on in his development report. On a similar note, I would like to personally thank all our committee volunteers for the time they put in and work they have done over the past year, and especially to Geoff who manages the county leagues and also acts as county secretary.

Going forward we will focus on delivering on the England Squash three initiatives, ('Squash Stars', 'Inclusiveness & Diversity', and 'Talent'), and work on adapting to the new media environment engaging with both the current squash playing community and attracting new participants at all ages, levels, and backgrounds. Above all we need your support and enthusiasm to keep the game alive, so please take every opportunity to participate in tournaments, friendlies, leagues etc. and above all have fun.



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Essex Squash Development – Chris Vine

The main thrusts of Development work have recently been as follows:

- Essex Squash SWOT – population (latest version attached) with Actions/timescales.
- Essex Junior Squash – guiding towards re-structuring and re-building.
- Women’s squash – ladies ladder expansion to North of the county
- England Squash Grant – spend – received grant (early Jan - £2.5k
- Squash from the Mosque & Mixed ability – London clubs (Walthamstow/Connaught/Woodford Wells
- London Youth Games 2024 & London Squash Project – Essex Boroughs

Essex Squash SWOT:

After having received feedback contributions from committee members and others, I have now updated the SWOT document (see attached) with (work in progress), actions and provisional timescales.

Hopefully, this is self-explanatory, however the effectiveness of it relies on a driving force. One of the main ways to do this is to create smaller pockets of driven activity in each region of the county, hence why we now have newish “Regional Development Reps” in the West, Central and North areas of the county – who are responsible amongst other things for spending the ES grant received recently in and around Hub Clubs as follows:

- **West** – Trevor Grinsted/Vicky Ashworth – Walthamstow/Woodford Wells
- **Central** – Jake Byrne/Matt Nott – Bishops Stortford/Park Drive Maldon
- **North** – Sally Meanley/Chris V – Lexden/Frinton/Mersea (with a hope that OTW will be in the future involved in some way)
- **South-East** – Gemma Walton/Alex Walton (Kingswood, Old Brentwood (Harry Burr) – Clements; Rayleigh/Thurrock; Trugym – met online 18th Feb.

The main intention is to develop these hubs around which regular sustainable development activity can take place targeting women and girls, older players, those who have yet to find squash (adults/juniors), less active, disadvantaged etc. Meetings have taken place and will continue to do so.

The SWOT document will be used to create a five-year strategy for the county.

Essex Junior Squash:

EJS continues to be an area of challenge as we seek new committee members and implement a new structure based on the successful Middlesex model. Discussions are ongoing, but we are unlikely to see major movement until after the AGM in June/July. However, as you can see from Matt’s report EJS is still functioning and fulfilling obligations. New Junior Grassroots events – based on Grand Prix’s are taking place around Walthamstow and Lexden **Women’s Squash:**

As with the juniors, women’s development continues to be difficult to energise for all sorts of reasons. To buck the trend however, I recently spoke to Vicky Ashworth who tells me that there is thriving ladies ladder running (weekly) at three clubs in the West – Walthamstow, Woodford Wells and Redbridge administered by Maureen Duke with 35 players on a WhatsApp group. Rounds involve at least ten players playing on an individual basis with food afterwards. I am liaising currently with Piper Tatum and Jenny Wright at Lexden with a view to setting up something similar in the North of the county. In addition, Vicky Ashworth is (has already) setting up new women’s introductory to squash sessions at Walthamstow Woodford Wells and Connaught to provide a steady supply of new players for the perpetuation of the ladder, using funds from the ES Grant.

I have now had initial discussions with Piper Tatum (Lexden) who is currently at Loughborough but returning to N Essex in April/May with a view to setting up a similar ladder comp around the North Clubs – Frinton/Mersea/Lexden/OTW/Park Drive. There are a number of lady players in the area based at the aforementioned clubs.

ES Grant:

As mentioned before, we have received funds from England Squash (£2.5k) – this has been match funded by ESRA funding – total pot = £3.25K. These funds are to be spent in the following priority areas:

- Talent Development – 4 Coaches online meetings to discuss implementation (EJS etc)
- Inclusion and Diversity – new women’s intro sessions at four clubs
- Squash stars – six new programs building on existing work at Hub Clubs



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The RDO team are leading this development work. Evidence will be gathered, reflecting costs, numbers attending, & case studies if relevant. First reporting date to England Squash 31st March.

Squash from the Mosque (SFM) and Mixed ability sessions (MAS):

England Squash ran two training sessions at Walthamstow in November 2023 for these two new participation initiatives. This was attended by coaches/ reps from all over the London Region including Essex. Walthamstow have been granted funding by ES to run both programs at the club in the coming months. Data, evidence, and insight gained will be used to further justify future funding investments from potential partners across the South-East and London Regions.

London Youth Games (LYG) 2024:

Trevor Grinsted and Vicky Ashworth have been leading on ensuring that teams for the London Youth games 2024 – finals to be held at the Cumberland Club in May 2024 are entered from the London Boroughs in Essex that have squash courts. Namely Havering, Redbridge, & Waltham Forest. Finally, four LYG “Inspire Festivals” are due to take place in early 2024, including two adapted (disability focus events) in London. These are for schools to experience what squash is using adapted equipment, mini walls, and courts where possible. Two are taking place in Essex as follows:

- Lee Valley Tennis Centre – Tuesday 27th Feb (Inspire Festival)
- Redbridge – Thursday 21st March – (Adapted Inspire disability focus)

These will be manned by Essex Coaches and are a part of a wider initiative supported by the LYG to promote squash to children who have never either experienced or heard of squash. Followed up by further “Squash Stars, MAS or Squash from the Mosque” programs.

Walthamstow Coach Trevor Grinsted ran the Lee Valley Festival together with fellow Coach Shaz Mohammed on the 27th Feb – 6 schools booked in, five attended from Ilford (1), Havering (1), Newham (2) and Tower Hamlets (1) – to be followed up in liaison with Emma Cranston from the LYG organisation.



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Essex Ladies

Essex Ladies League - Kerry Munn

The ladies Essex league was disbanded at the end of the summer season 2023 due to lack of teams being able to enter. As a result of this, Maureen Duke from Woodford Wells created a format to keep ladies squash going in the area.

Starting with three host venues in 2023 (Redbridge, Woodford Wells and Walthamstow) Maureen invited all the lady players to join a "ladder". All levels of ladies are welcomed from beginners up to elite players from the county. Our age range is from teenagers to octogenarians!

Format is as follows:

Each venue hosts a match approximately once a fortnight and Maureen matches up levels to those who are available on that night. After lots of squash, we all retire to the bar and have some food and drink and socialising.

In 2024 Club Kingswood was added as a venue and we are hoping to have a fifth venue later in the year. We now have a group of [40+] participating ladies who are all invited to play every fortnight and we are averaging around [15] players per event. Players are from Redbridge, Woodford Wells, Walthamstow, Kingswood, Epping, Connaught and Old Brentwood.

The first "season" has now drawn to a close and will reopen in September 2024

Senior Ladies Intercounty Activities - Lara newton

Keeley Peacock first on versus Olivia Stephens and Gemma Walton up against Eve Griffith.

Keeley secured the win in a quick 3-0. Gemma lost in a close 3-1.

India Webb and Lara Newton on next. India lost out 3-0, battling hard. Lara won a close 3-2 from 2-0

down. Piper Tatum goes on at 2-2 all in matches and loses out in a tight 3-0. Essex 2 - Wales 3

Shropshire next at 3 :) Lara Newton and Gemma Walton on first, both with close 3-2 battles, Lara losing narrowly and Gemma securing a solid win. Keeley Peacock (the 3-0 merchant) on next quickly securing another 3-0 win. India Webb steals a nice 3-2 win from 2-0 down. Piper Tatum loses 3-0 against a tough opponent.

Devon was next at 9am the following day Keeley Peacock and Gemma Walton kick off the early start against Devon this morning. Keeley securing the win in the 5th and Gemma losing in a hard 3-1. Next on was Lara Newton and India Webb. Lara won in three and India lost in five in a long battle. Piper Tatum on last for the decider and takes it in the fifth.

The Essex ladies finish 5th overall 🏆





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Marketing & Media Report – Tony Bickley

2023/24 Activity

There were three key objectives for our 2023/24 activity, which were as follows:

- Redesign and publish the new Essex SRA website, with an aim to be mobile friendly with content aimed at a variety of stakeholders (including racket and non-racket members)
- Relaunch our social media presence (notably Instagram & Facebook) with regular updates, fresh content and strong engagement.
- Develop a Marketing strategy which aligns to the aims and objectives of Essex SRA.

Website

The website was redesigned (through the support of Pippa Neller) and relaunched in May 2024. There are still some elements to update, but on the whole the website is ready to go and provides a fresh and modern feel for our audience. The website will become the single point of truth for Essex squash and Racketball, and will look to share news stories, promote upcoming matches/tournaments/events, and support the work of our clubs across the county.

Social Media

We have relaunched our two main social media channels and have increased the number of posts/stories across both channels. We have seen an increase of around 200 followers, and strong engagement across a variety of different topics. The channels will be used to drive more traffic to the website and continue to promote the sport in a positive manner within the community. A big thanks to Jen Wright for her continued support and Mike Hegarty/Patrick Osborn for providing regular content and updates for the website and social media.

Marketing Strategy

A new strategy has been developed, and this strategy will underpin the marketing and media activity we undertake moving forward.

Marketing Strategy 2024-25

Overall Aim

This marketing plan aims to increase participation, visibility, and community engagement for the County Squash Association. By implementing targeted strategies and leveraging various marketing channels, we aim to attract new players, retain existing members, and enhance the overall profile of squash within the county.

Objectives

- 1) Increase Membership
- 2) Enhance Visibility
- 3) Promote Events
- 4) Foster Community Engagement

Audiences

Primary: Local squash players and enthusiasts, students and young athletes, families looking for recreational activities.

Secondary: Local businesses and sponsors, Media and influences in the sports community.

Digital Marketing Strategies a) Social Media Campaigns

- **Platforms:** Facebook, Instagram & YouTube
- **Content:** Share regular updates, player highlights, training tips and event promotions.
- **Engagement:** Run competitions, live Q&A sessions with coaches, and member stories
- **Target:** Achieve a 20% increase in followers and engagement on social media platforms within six months.

b) Email Marketing

- **Newsletter:** Monthly newsletter featuring upcoming events, member spotlights and squash tips.
- **Target:** Achieve a 25% open rate and 10% click-through rate.



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c) Website Optimisation

- **Content:** Regular updates to the website with news, events and resources for clubs and players.
- **SEO:** Implement SEO best practices to improve search engine ranking.
- **User Experience:** Continually test and make updates to improve mobile-friendliness, ease of navigation and user flow.
- **Target:** Increase website traffic by 30% within a year.



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Essex Closed – Mike Hegarty

The 2024 Essex Senior Closed Squash Championship returned over the weekend of 19th-21nd January, hosted for the third time at Lexden Rackets & Fitness Club in Colchester.

The event saw a breadth of Essex born or resident players descend on Lexden Rackets & Fitness Club in Colchester from far afield as Norfolk and Guernsey, for a fun but tough weekend filled with over 120 matches over [15] playing categories. This was a significant increase from [9] the previous year.

Millane Contract Services Ltd once again donated to the prize fund which was to be split equally across the Open A and Ladies A events, reflecting the event and sport's values of equality and inclusivity for all. To that end the event was a huge success. With a fantastic mix of Open, Ladies and age group categories there was a space for everyone.

We had the most entries in the Closed yet with over 70 individuals, and more in double categories. These were condensed into fewer, but fuller categories this year. To the point where we had a waiting list for the B and C!

Age group entries were disappointing. Unfortunately, we were not able to run Ladies O40s and O50s. It's worth noting though that almost all of the age group entries last year were double entries, so players were playing an Open A or B for example then their age group. The feedback this year from most of the players was they chose to concentrate on only one category, and a great many were returning players from previous years.

So overall, participation was at a high, in spite of the timing - we are still in a post-pandemic world and is also exam time for the students.

If given the opportunity to host this again, the ladies age groups really need some focus and attention to attract more players into this category.

Ladies' participation.

Albeit the Ladies 'A' draw was full and some of the best quality matches we've had, there are a lot more ladies playing in Essex who did not enter. My understanding is that the ladies' section would be keener to participate if their draw could be held over one day. The scheduling for this was a challenge! Giving everyone appropriate rest time between matches and different categories etc. It took me [3] very late nights to get sorted out, and casting my mind back I just don't think I could have made a one day draw possible, but will keep in mind for next time. If Lexden is successful in Running the closed for 2025

Beginner participation.

Disappointingly, we barely got any traction with encouraging lower standard players into the competition. We are really good at connecting with established league players, but encouraging new ones to take up competitive play is more of a challenge. It's a huge opportunity to grow participation in the county.

The feedback from those at the event was extremely positive. The Friday sessions were hampered by a crash on the A12 which couldn't be predicted, but all the participants were brilliantly patient and accommodating. There was the odd grumble but that's totally understandable.

We didn't hear many other grumbles - we got the usual ones about travel distance etc., but far fewer this year. I don't think it's possible to win there, as move it south and those in the north would have to travel, but and have it north and those in the south will have to travel. We will look at the schedule and try and engineer a later start on the Saturday morning. Though it may not be possible, and in reality it is only one weekend per year.



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Upper Level Participation

In spite of Daryl Selby, Richie Fallows and Ben Coleman all recently retiring from the professional circuit, Essex can boast still #7 male and #3 female PSA professionals on the circuit.

The Open A final was won by Aaron Allpress, PSA 226, defeating Michael Tallentire, PSA 496 in the final. It was 3-0 but highly entertaining and well received by a packed crowd. The Ladies final was won by Fareda Rakaybi, PSA 339 who defeated surprise finalist Nikki Taylor, also 3-0. All the finals across the whole day were hugely entertaining, played in the right spirit and enjoyed by all.

We had some new to Lexden (but not to Essex) faces, one travelled from North Norfolk, another from Guernsey! That's really cool to see people making that effort.

Sponsors, Millane Contract Services Ltd and Karakal, were brilliantly supportive as ever and a separate thank you will go to them very soon.

Finally, Many, many thanks for all your support. Hopefully at the Closed we've delivered value for the players, sponsors and Essex SRA alike. For those who attended the event, I'm very glad you had a good time, and hopefully we can host the next one and make it even bigger and better still. It took a MUCH time and effort from our volunteer team, and I thank them for their participation in making it an enjoyable and entertaining week end for all.

Thanks again to sponsors Millane Contract Services Ltd and Karakal for their continued support and without whom this event would not have been possible.

Full results

Open A - 1: Aaron Allpress. 2: Michael Tallentire. 3: Jon Matthews. 4: Jamie Brown

Open A Plate - 1: Mike Aley. 2: Paul Wallace

Ladies A – 1: Fareda Elrakaybi. 2: Nikki Taylor.3: Kealey Peacock 4: Amelia Brooke

Ladies A Plate – 1: India Webb. 2: Gemma Walton

Open B – 1: Chriss Purkiss. 2: Paul Hodge

Open B Plate – 1: Tony Bickley. 2: Jimmy Lee

Open C – 1: Max Newton. 2: Rob Keogh

Open C Plate – 1: Andy Bridges. 2: Richard Saunders

Mens Over 40 – 1. Mohammad Adnan-Khan 2. Richard Saunders

Mens Over 45 – 1. Martin Watts. 2. Steve Smith

Mens Over 45 Plate – 1. Malcom McEwan. 2. Paul Hodge

Mens Over 50 – 1. Dave Smith. 2. Stacy RThickbroom

Mens Over 50 Plate – 1. Jon Caton. 2. Joseph Bateman

Mens Over 55 – 1. Nigel Bacon. 2. Steve Smith

Mens Over 55 Plate – 1. Adrian Bunting. 2 Andy Bridges Mens

Over 65 – 1. Brian Clay 2. Wyn Edwards.

Mens Over 70 – 1. Matt Rayner. 2. Geoff Went

Ladies Over 40 – No Entries

Ladies Over 50 – No Entries



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Squash 57 – Racketball – Patrick Osbourne

Much has been going on with the Squash57 scene.

The Essex Open Racketball/Squash57 Doubles Championship was held at The Woodford Wells Club on Sunday 25th February. The entry numbers were high with competitors travelling up to 200 miles to take part though unfortunately the reigning champions had to pull out through injury.

Results:

- Women new to Squash57: a round robin mixed partner event saw Tahiyya Naidoo and Claire Hamilton taking the honours.
- Open B: an extremely popular and closely fought competition with many matches going the distance in front of a crowded balcony. Pool 1 was won by Paul Chaplin and Nick Whiddon who push Tom Kirrage and Paul Tuck into 2nd place with a 2-1 marathon. Pool 2 was won by 'UKRB regulars' Stuart Tyler and John Waller with local favourites Akhtar Khokhar and Harry Best, who had never played doubles before, coming 2nd. The semi-finals were won by Chaplin&Whiddon and Tyler&Waller, who dropped their first game. The final was a close fought crowd-pleasing contest that saw Chaplin&Whiddon victorious.
- Open A: a very strong turnout which included both of the winners of the UK-Racketball East of England Doubles event but with different partners. The pool matches were extremely tight with half of them being 2-1 results including one that went a full hour for the three games. The last match on court was the 'Open A' final which saw Gareth Naidoo and Dan Caton come from behind to defeat Zoe Fennell and Patrick Osborn 2-1 in another epic encounter. A video of the final can be found here: <https://youtu.be/NCKTxOwWvYw>



A big thank you again goes to all those who helped in the build-up and on the day, including Akhtar in the kitchen, and the competitors for their sportsmanship throughout.

On Sunday 5th April, Essex Squash held their annual Open Racketball / Squash57 Singles Championships. It was a hugely successful day at The Woodford Wells Club (WW) with players travelling from as far afield as Dover, Bournemouth, Bristol & Hull and National Champions taking up the challenge.



There were 6 titles up for grabs including a friendly women's competition which saw marathon runner Tahiyya Naidoo (WW) undefeated, pushing squash legend Averil Murphy (WW) into the RU position.

The O60's saw serial National Champion John Cordeaux (Stamford) coming through his pool without dropping a game, as was also the case for Graham Appleby (Maidstone). The other semi-finalists were UKRB regular Akhtar Khokhar (WW) and Richard Heighton (Southgate). In the end it was to be Cordeaux defeating Appleby in the closely contested final.



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In the O50's, Marc Thornley (WW) won his pool having avoided an early scare from Tom KIRRAGE (BStortford), Andy Maxwell had a similar pool experience, being pushed all the way by Richard Norman (Maldon). As was true in the O60's, the pool winners made it through to the final where Thornley overcame Maxwell.

The O40's saw Paul Norton (Ferriby Hall) cleaning up with Ryan Worthington (Kingswood) as RU.

The largest and arguably the most diverse entry was in the 'OPEN B'. After 26 pool matches the semifinals were Trevor Grinsted (Walthamstow) playing Paul Tuck (BStortford) and Tommy Meadows (Dover) playing Nick Jenkins (Bournemouth). Jenkins won a marathon semi and despite playing in 2 events he still had the legs to beat Tuck in the final.

Gareth Naidoo (WW) was defending his title in the 'OPEN A'. Naidoo won his pool matches without dropping a game with Paul Wallace (Kingswood) RU. In the other pool both Paul Norton (Ferriby Hall) and Paul Blom (Connaught) survived early scares against Patrick Osborn (WW) and Will Johnson (Chantry) respectively. Again it was the pool winners who won their semi-finals and despite having a marathon day Norton put up a valiant fight before succumbing to Naidoo's power play, job done - title successfully defended.



Videos of some of the matches can be found in the YouTube video playlist here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQqNxkx4OjisUfCels-kqUupat8W3Q4d->

The inaugural 2024 Essex Racketball/Squash57 CUP competition took place at The Woodford Wells Club on Sunday, June 23rd. Eight teams, each consisting of five players, competed in a series of fixtures that included three singles matches and one doubles match, with each team playing in four to five fixtures.



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Player	Age	Sex	Club	Rank	Points	Games	Matches
Adam Grilli	28	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Gareth Naidoo	35	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Paul Chaplin	32	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Rich McCarthy	30	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Trevor Grinsted	38	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Zoe Fennell	25	F	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10

Player	Age	Sex	Club	Rank	Points	Games	Matches
Patrick Osborn	30	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Marc Thornley	35	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
David Morse	32	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Mike O'Brien	30	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Zoe Fennell	25	F	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10

Player	Age	Sex	Club	Rank	Points	Games	Matches
Sam Weatherhead	30	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Jon Caton	35	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10
Simon Shipgood	32	M	Woodford Wells	10	10	10	10

The level of play was exceptionally high, and the sportsmanship displayed was commendable. Broxbourne, Kingswood, and two teams from Woodford Wells advanced to the semi-finals with some very close matches where match points were earned and then lost. Ultimately, both Woodford Wells sides came through to compete in the final. This was not the 1-sided affair that some were predicting. In the first wave of matches it was the WW2 who won the doubles 2-0 and nearly the 2nd string singles as well, losing 1-2, and so there was still all to play for. When Patrick Osborn got to game point in the first game against Gareth Naidoo it was as though anything could happen but WW2 (Osborn; Marc Thornley; David Morse; Mike O'Brien and Zoe Fennell) were destined to be the runners up and the winners were WW1 (Naidoo; Dan Caton; Sam Weatherhead; Jon Caton & Simon Shipgood).



Congratulations to the 10% who did not drop a game all day. A special thank you goes to the captains - Adam Grilli, Gareth Naidoo, Paul Chaplin, Rich McCarthy, Trevor Grinsted, and Zoe Fennell - who invested their time in assembling the teams and ensuring the event ran smoothly.

Lastly, a big thank you to our sponsor for the day, KARAKAL.



A huge thank you to everyone who helped out in the build-up and on the day including our sponsors for all three events





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Squash57 Inter-County Championships 2024

The weekend of 11th & 12th May saw Essex competing in the UK Racketball Masters Intercounty Team Championships 2024 at the Berkhamsted Lawn Tennis & Squash Rackets Club. Essex competed in two age categories, O50s and 60s, and was represented by players from 3 of Essex's top racketball (aka Squash57) clubs: Connaught, Kingswood and Woodford Wells. Each fixture was comprised of 4 matches, 3 singles and 1 Doubles, and in the case of a draw there would be game and if necessary, point countbacks

The Essex O50s team (O50 for men, O45 for women) was Jason Friend, Pascual Dibattista and Stacy Thickbroom (captain) focusing on singles and the doubles pairing initially being Zoe Fennell and Marc Thornley, Marc being replaced by Jason after Marc withdrew. At the end of the two days, Zoe remained undefeated and Essex had secured a creditable bronze medal, narrowly losing to Surrey (eventual winners) on points count back in their semi-final.

The O60s team were one of the favourites with a strong line up of 4 Woodford Wells and 1 Connaught player. Patrick Osborn, Matthew Hibberd and Steve Banks played the singles matches and Akhtar Khokhar and Patrick the doubles (individual players in the O60's being allowed to play both a singles and a Doubles in the same fixture). Both Essex and Surrey had won all of their pool matches prior to the 'final' fixture of the weekend which witnessed another solid performance allowing Essex to win the O60 title. Matt and Steve held their own in positions 2 and 3 winning roughly half of their matches but the honours must fall to Patrick and Akhtar as both finished the weekend undefeated.

Overall, a splendid weekend of racketball at a superb venue supported by the main sponsor, **Karakal**.



Essex Squash & Racketball Association

Men's League Results for 2023/24

For this last season 2023/24 we have had a departure from the traditional approach of two sessions, one for Autumn and Spring to one combined season running from October to March/April. This was a new approach and will be reviewed at the 2024 AGM. The league for autumn 2023/24 season has an increased number of teams to 29 which is an increase of three teams. Again, the summer was back down to 24 which is not unusual as some of the Premier teams withdraw for the summer.

This year as a pilot activity Essex Squash ran a Cup competition to make up for the loss of fixtures. This cup competition Final was held at Woodford Wells 19th April 2024 and was very well received. Also, the Division Winner trophies were presented at the Cup Final.

Everyone now seems to be experienced at using the LMS system and it runs well. Unfortunately, there still seems to be too many re-arrangements. However, this may be addressed at the League meeting.

if any clubs have less able people to play team squash, then let me know.

Essex S.R.A. Autumn- Spring 2023-24

Premier Champions - ***Parkdrive (1)***

Division East Champions - **Old Brentwood**

Division 1W Champions - ***Woodford Wells (2)***

Essex S.R.A Summer 2023

Premier Barker Champions – Kingswood

Premier Selby Champions– ***David Lloyd (GP) [2]***

Division #1E Champions – Old Brentwood

Division #W Champions – Woodford Wells [3]



Essex Squash & Racketball Association

Intercounty – Mark Kirkman

Men – ICC

Senior 1 - Men's side are in the Premier Division and faced a typically strong Yorkshire side, amongst others. Finished 5th and stay in the Premier.

Senior 2 – Came second in their group v Hampshire and Middx.

O35's – through to finals day, finished 3rd

O45's – playing Stage 2 as hosts. No matches played as all opponents failed to field teams!!!!

O55's – through to finals, finished 7th. O65's

– through to finals – you'd know that.

Notable's.....both Nigel Bacon (60's) and Tony Savage (o40's) are now regular England players in their age groups.

Notable – Connaught's Keith Lesser won the o40's National Racketlon singles AND doubles this year and will be competing in the World Racketlon o40's this term. He got to the semi-finals last year, and finished 2024 ranked 5th in the world.

Notable – Yusuf Sheikh won the German u19's. Connaught's Kylan Calder finished runner up in both the German u13's, the Italian u13's and the European Junior Squash Championships u13's held in Poland.

Notable – Patrick Osborn selected to play for England o60's Racketball. Essex won the Inter County o60's.

Women – ICC

Essex Women's Senior team are in Division One, and are fighting for promotion to the Premier Division. They finished 5th.

Ladies o40 – 3rd Place



Essex Squash & Racketball Association

JUNIOR Activity – Sally Brown

September 2023

The new season got under way in earnest in September with a full complement of committee members and a reasonably healthy bank balance.

Membership renewals were down on the 2022/23 season with 64 players renewing, paying a subscription of £60 - a £20 reduction on the previous season due to there being only being 3 scheduled county training days.

The County Closed took place on 24th September at Lexden Rackets and Fitness Club and with the exception of the u15 girls (no entries), each age group was contested. Entry numbers were lower than previous years which is symptomatic of a general decline in the [number](#) of juniors playing squash across the country. Winners and runners up were:

2023	Winner	Runner Up
Mixed u9	Ethan Edwards	n/a
Girls u11	Francesca Sutton	n/a
Girls u13	Grace Woodhead	Abbie Ford
Girls u17	Imogen Fincken	Rebecca Salmon
Girls u19	Amelie Brooke	Sophie Foskett
Boys u11	Toby Edwards	Fintan Gallagher
Boys u13	Tristan Sutton	Sasha Whiddon
Boys u15	Matthew Sutton	Jonty Godfrey
Boys u17	Dylan Smithson	Louis Brown
Boys u19	Jamie Brown	Oren Goddard

October 2023

The first County training session took place on 22nd October. Squads were broadly organised by age group and gender of players.

We also reintroduced a separate development squad which ensured we could more easily bring in players who were new to squash but were not ready to join an age group squad.

Feeding into this development squad were 21 new EJS players who we recruited via a taster session held on the same day as county training.

November 2023

Stage one of the Inter Counties took place over the weekend of 11th/12th November in Hertfordshire.

Teams were entered for ALL boys age groups and the u13 and u19 girls.

For the first time parents were asked to make a £30 coaching contribution. This ensured that only those selected to compete for Essex would have to pay extra which seemed a fairer way to manage our finances and is very much in line with how regional Aspire training operates.

Three teams made it through to the Finals weekend which were held in Sheffield in April 2024.

- u19 ladies (trophy finals)
- u13 boys (plate finals)
- u17 boys (plate finals)



Essex Squash & Racketball Association

December 23

December is typically a quiet month on the squash calendar. Sadly, our Chair Fran Brooke had to step down and we continued to operate without a chair for the rest of the season.

Essex Junior Squash received funding from England Squash during the 2022/23 season for initiatives such as squash stars, diversity and inclusion. Not all of this funding was spent and as a result we entered the 2023/24 season with a surplus which we ring fenced for development.

By the end of 2023 we had distributed some of this funding to MICA/Lexden (Sally Meanly), Park Drive (Matt Nott) and Walthamstow (Trevor Grinsted). All 3 clubs are doing an amazing job of developing grass roots squash.

January 2024

We held the 2nd of our county training sessions at Bishops Stortford, Lexden and Woodford Wells on 14 January.

We took a choice in the 23/24 season to spread the training venues more evenly across the county. This was not always universally popular and we recognise it can be difficult for families with more than 1 junior playing at different locations. This is something we will continue to work on to find the best balance between driving countywide participation and accommodating families.

February 2024

The final county training session took place on 18 February and was well attended.

The committee noted it was very early in the season to end county training given the season does not end until June/July.

Some parents of development squad players many of whom had only just joined, enquired whether anything further was planned. We agreed to run another training session at no cost to the players in April/May.

March 2024

Although only half way through the season the composition of the committee was in a state of flux with changes of incoming and outgoing personnel.

- Fran Brooke and Matt Nott had stood down.
- Sally Brown and Lauren Woodhead announced they would be standing down at the end of the season.
- Sally Meanley (MICA/Lexden) joined the committee as tournaments organiser.
- Jenny Wright (Lexden) joined the committee and got to work straight away on improving our presence on all of the social media platforms as well as working out the best way to get our website up and running again.

April 2024

The National Inter Counties finals took place over the weekend of 13th/14th April in Sheffield. Unfortunately, due to the timing of the competition (during the Easter holidays) only the u19s ladies could make the trip. The team which consisted of Amelie Brooke, Imogen Fincken and Sophie Foskett did themselves and Essex proud by finishing runners up to Hampshire.

May 2024

We ran an additional development squad training session on 19th May at Lexden.

Matt Nott (Park Drive), Trevor Grinsted (Walthamstow) and Gemma Walton (Kingswood) joined the committee and will take on membership, county training and inter county admin from myself.

With Lauren Woodhead and Steve Aspinall also stepping down it is encouraging to see new people coming onto the committee and I feel very positive about the future of EJS.

June 2024

Essex currently has 17 players ranked in the top 20 in England which is 2 more than June 2023.

July 2024



Essex Squash & Racketball Association

June 24	Boys	Girls
Mixed u9	2	0
u11	0	1
u13	3	2
u15	1	0
u17	2	0
u19	2	4

July 2024

- Another try-out day has been scheduled for 9th July to be held at Park Drive and with 22 sign ups is fully booked.
- Sally Meanley is making excellent progress on preparations for the Essex County Closed Championships to be held at Lexden on 21st/22nd September (date to be confirmed).
- The AGM is scheduled to take place on Monday 8th July via zoom

Matt Nott, has agreed to take a position on the EJS committee as “Memberships” (which was part of my role), in order to focus on further development and memberships growth. Due to Chris Vine as Essex Development Officer who is stepping down after many years on the Essex Association, Chris Vine has initiated a “Regional Development Hub” with Matt Nott (Maldon), Trevor Grinsted & Vicky Ashworth (Walthamstow), Gemma Walton (Kingswood), Sally Meanley (Lexden/Mersea) and we are regularly meeting once/quarter to share and discuss opportunities. This has led to the below over the past season: – Lexden

1st October 2023

East - Development Workshop

Circa 26 Juniors Attended

Organised by Matt Nott, coaching by Trevor Grinsted

Walthamstow

15th October 2023

South - Development Workshop

Circa 26 Juniors Attended

Organised by myself, coaching by Sally Meanley

Frinton

22nd February 2024

North - Copper Competition

Circa 15 Juniors Attended

Organised Chris Vine, supported by Sally Meanley/Matt Nott

Lexden

7th July 2024

East - Development Workshop and EJS membership/Closed promotion in September

Circa 19 Juniors Attended

Organised by Matt Nott, coaching by Amy Aspinall, supported by Ian Cook and Sally Meanley

Summary

This is my last season as secretary of Essex Junior Squash as secretary in 2014. Initially the role involved keeping the membership database accurate and up to date and as the years have passed so I have taken on additional responsibilities.

July 2024



Essex Squash & Racketball Association

On a personal note, my son Jamie has played for EJS in every age junior group since U11s and will start university in September. Whilst my youngest son Louis still has 3 years left as a junior now seems the right time to be stepping down. I wish the new committee the very best and look forward to seeing new initiatives over the coming season.



Essex Squash & Racketball Association

Referee & Marking – Paul Clarke

This year the WSF rules were amended most people have adapted to the changes. I have noticed markers at Essex league matches implementing the changes. Also, several players have consulted both me and Andrew Sweeney on other issues (interference and injuries). It is good to see an interest in this important area of Squash and Racketball.

Lexden hosted a general markers course run by Steve Eccles, which went down well. England Squash have taken control of this course. I was invited to be a Referee consultant on a self-employed basis to present this course inter alia the Beds, Essex, Herts, London, and Kent areas. Unfortunately, England Squash wanted all Referee Consultants to sign a contract. I declined after reading the contract and felt that the so-called consultants should be regarded as part time employees. England squash have refused to change their views. Consequently, six referees have pulled out and refused to sign the contracts. Who will run the courses in these areas is unknown at this time.

I have been in contact with the new professional referee Jason Foster who will be taking over the role of Senior Referee Consultant about getting the message across re changes in Referee thinking, especially in the Professional game. I am hoping future changes will be explained to the squash community in conjunction with the WSO.

Good news Andrew Sweeney has been selected to referee at the World Masters in Amsterdam. He has refereed in Portugal at the Mixed U15/17 team events. I refereed in Bucharest at the Division 3 Team competition. I have been selected to referee at the European Clubs Competition in September.

For more information, please contact me Paul Clarke Tel: 07821 985529 email: clarke1956@btinternet.com

Essex Players with PSA rankings (July 2024)

Men

Owain Taylor: 100
Aaron Allpress: 250
Yusuf Sheikh: 360
Michael Tallentire: 506 Joel
Braddock: 572
Stanley Sykes: 584
Gareth Naidoo: 865

Ladies

Lara Newton: 272
Fareda Rakaybi: 333

We ‘All’ need to work together to build the future for Essex Squash & Squash57 (Racketball)

Contributions

All Elected Committee Members and Patrick Osborne

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