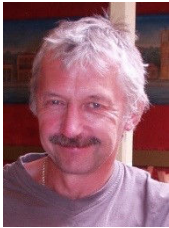




ESRA County Chair Report July 2026 AGM



I always find it difficult to put this brief together as a lot goes on within our Squash community and it's easy for me to overlook some important events. That said I find it very rewarding to hear the successes of Essex players, and as you will see later Essex has a number of individuals to be very proud of.

As I mentioned in last year's report our National Governing Body, England Squash, are working hard on the perception of squash with new initiatives to support and promote the run up to the 2028 Olympics. I would encourage you to visit their website for news and ensure you have activated your membership to make the most of the benefits available.

We had a disaster back in May when our media service host was hacked forcing us to take down the website. At the time of writing this it is still under repair, it required a complete rebuild, but hopefully it will soon be back up.

Development - in squash is mainly about seeding the future of the game through junior programs that instil in them a desire to play that they carry into adulthood. Growing the sport by attracting adults is a very different story and requires a significant effort, willingness and collaboration between Coaches and facilities, something that is sadly lacking in most areas.

It's all too easy to see empty courts as opportunities to turn them into something else rather than look at ways to get players on them. There are ways to improve this, but it requires a complete shift of attitude and invested effort from facilities. I am sure there are a lot of good ideas but just a couple like Gym trainers/Pilates classes using Racketball as warmup/down for their clients, offering on court taster sessions when Padel is called off due to weather, having a willing coach and helping support his business etc. etc.

I was at a club the other day and a young couple said they would like to try squash (having never played a racket sport before) and the club handed them both a cheap racket and a double yellow ball and sent them round to a cold court – how productive is that!

What do we need:

- Someone to take on the role of club/facilities liaison to ensure all are kept up to date on County/England Squash matters introduce new ideas, and interface with our development and media officers.
- A representative for Essex women/girls to link in with the London borough projects and translate those initiatives where possible into Essex County projects.
- An active Coaches network
- Someone to manage fund raising events and seek sponsors for things like county squad kit.

Players of Note:

Lee Jemmett - outstanding Essex squash (male) player - winner of 4 out of 4 Regional events, British National Champion and Runner Up in the British Open.

Kylen Calder and **Tristan Sutton** for being selected for England BU15

Patrick Osborn - Enjoyed success in Helsinki winning the 55+ comp and finishing runner up in the Doubles A event. Also, his many victories in the O60s category in the UKRA events, and with **John Cordeaux** their success in the doubles

Patrick should also be commended for his work on promoting squash 57 in the UK and abroad

Keith Lesser - who I believe is ranked #1 in the UK in Racketlon at o40 and is ranked #1 in o40 doubles, and #3 in the world

Other Players of note making Essex proud - **Jackie Gregory** - for captaining both masters inter county teams and her performance in the masters tournaments, **Anthony Savage**, **Nigel Bacon**, **Paul Wallace**, **Mike Aley**, **Rory Pennell** and **Louis Brown** - still a junior who won the Connaught A grade open



London Youth Games - London & the South East Regional Forum (LSERF), encompasses Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey & Middlesex. In 2024 LSERF was able to get squash re-introduced into the London Youth Games, and it was run very successfully again in 2025 and involved 17 teams from London boroughs, including those in Essex.

London Squash - The group has also been very proactive in creating a new entity of 'London Squash' as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation), London Squash will be a new body set up by England Squash and the County Associations which have London Boroughs in their territory and hence in their remit, namely Essex, Kent, Middlesex and Surrey. (5 London Boroughs fall within the Essex border - Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge & Waltham Forest).

By creating this new organisation focused on London, we will have a much better chance of getting support from London Sport, obtaining grants, attracting sponsorship, and forming sustainable partnerships.

The main aims of London Squash are to:

- To promote physical activity and decrease health inequalities utilising squash as an engagement tool for those people living in London.
- To initiate and oversee projects for the development of physical activities utilising squash.
- To manage the funds provided for the projects

World Champs in London - At the point of writing this report I have just found out that London will host the 2027 World Squash Championships (20th March – 4th April 2027), venue TBD. This is great news, especially with the timing of creating 'London Squash' and the run up to 2028 Olympics.

ES Membership - The England Squash individual membership launched mid-2024 is on track, as you should be aware by mandating 'Play' membership for County league and Inter-County squad players, the County gets 20% rebate from England Squash for every player and club affiliated. As mentioned earlier ensure you have activated your membership to make the most of the benefits available.

Money - From a financial point of view, the income from the county league registration and England Squash rebate dictates the funding we have available to support our Inter-County squads, with a small amount left over for development. Essex have made several contributions towards the work in London over the past year, and Trevor Grinstead has joined the committee to manage our associated development work. Elaine manages our accounts which are presented later in the county report.

England Squash - are working on expanding coaching pathways and networks (something we need discussed with Essex coaches).

ES have just launched a new program 'Play Squash' which over 500 clubs have so far signed up to (12 affiliated clubs in Essex) are listed but not sure if they have signed up?), we need to push this to our clubs and coaches to get any sort of session running, information and tool kits are available.

England Squash are also heavily involved with the world Championships (noted above), 2027 European Games in June 2027 and 2028 Olympics. They have also just released a new strategy 'The Future Starts Today' which was presented at the recent ES Council meeting, we have some questions around how it engages with the County Associations which we are taking up via the London & SE forum.

Memberships take up are on target and growing steadily. All this and more were discussed at the June Council meeting, I will get all the papers loaded to our ESRA website once fixed, and I encourage you to review in more detail.

2024/25 participation survey shows that the number of those playing annually are close to the 2015/16 levels.

The Essex Closed - was run very successfully at Lexdon again, I would like to thank Jenny Wright and her 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 and timing for the next County Closed is under discussion and will be decided soon.

Inter-County - The results from the Inter-County squads are detailed later 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.

ESRA - The committee 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



Essex Squash & Racketball Association



addition, we must constitutionally manage certain aspects of the county governance, like safeguarding, accounts, AGM, communication etc. All the elected members are voluntary, and we try where possible to act upon issues that may arise within our squash community. We welcome helpful advice and volunteers to take on some of the more challenging items, such as the county closed.

Going forward we will as always face challenges, however, the growing interest in Padel offers opportunity as it gets more players of all ages engaged in racket sports and given the right encouragement could well transition many of them to squash and racketball, plus provide more opportunity for coaches. We recognise times have changed and the whole social media environment provides a great way of engaging and creating communities round our sport, which is borne out by the great work going on with our juniors and junior development. We will also of course focus on delivering on the fully inclusive England Squash initiatives which you can find on the ES website with other information as noted above.

I would like to say a special thanks to the members of the committee and volunteers who do all the work, and thank you all for your support and enthusiasm in keeping the game alive, so please continue to take every opportunity to participate in tournaments, friendlies, leagues, social media groups etc. and above all have fun.

David Neller
Chair Essex SRA, London & South East Regional Forum