



E.S.S.R.A



## East of Scotland Squash & Racketball Association

AGM 2014-15

Jun 25 @ Colinton Castle SC

### Chairperson's Report

Office bearers 2014-15: Christy Looby (Chair), Adrian Craxton (Secretary), Mark Adderley (Treasurer & SSRL Rep), Dougie Brown (League Secretary), Claire Gray (Junior Convenor), Richard McIntosh, Ross Anderson, Iain Clark, David Coutts, Verity Whiteside, Moira Atkinson (OCMs)

The above committee has had a busy and fruitful season since we met for the new season on Aug 7, 2014. Iain Clark & David Coutts brought fresh energy & ideas to the committee.

Club membership development initiative: The committee decided to allocate £3000 of funds to help clubs drive membership development. Despite a lot of publicity, only £800 of this has been applied for by the clubs and less than half that paid out on successful completion.

This funding remains available, plus we are also funding coaches to complete their certificates.

Social Media, print media & website: David Coutts & I brought the association into the modern era with @EastSquash on Twitter (190 followers) and East of Scotland Squash & Racketball on Facebook (110 followers).

Almost weekly, we have got a snippet of East Squash news into the Edinburgh Evening News during season. The hope is that we can raise the local profile of the game and perhaps some new members for clubs.

The website has been coasting in maintenance mode, currently a media student is reviewing it with a view to translating it using Bootstrap into something that is mobile compatible. We also plan to incorporate EventBrite to allow electronic entry to junior events.

Sponsorship: We recruited 5 sponsors for the leagues to whom a debt of thanks is owed.

- Avista Technologies (3 divisions for 2 years)
- Titan Sports
- JC Lindsay & Co.
- Scotstrings
- GameChangers

This enabled us to produce the stationery for the leagues with suitable advertising at no cost and also made our press releases into a more polished package.

Tournaments:

- The East Championship was last run by the committee in 2006. This year it was revitalised to run at Colinton Castle on Nov 8, 19 as an open tournament. With 24 entries from East, West & Central regions, it was run as a qualifier round into the Monrad groups. Ali Mutch of Grange won an exciting open final against Chris Gray of Colinton Castle while Senga Macfie won the ladies with Sabine MacKenzie of Bridge of Allan the runner-up.
- The East Masters 2015 was held on Jan 17 & 18 at Edinburgh Sports Club. There were a total of 73 competitors who took part in 2 ladies and 8 mens' events, down 25 on 2014. East players Paul Jenkins, Simon Gogolin, Jim Dougal & Ian Ross recorded wins in their age groups. Thanks to tournament director Eric Donohoe for yet another superb year as tournament director.

Non-league Conference: This was put out to the clubs as an initiative to introduce social & club-night players in the clubs to team squash. Thanks to the anchor teams of Galashiels, Colinton Castle & Grange, the first round took place in November at Colinton. 7 rounds later, we were back at Colinton, having also sampled the competition & hospitality of Watsonians, Galashiels, Grange, Dean & Edinburgh Sports Club in the mean-time.

Each round featured from 12 to 20 players with usually 2-4 female players. New friendships were made, new talent uncovered & hopefully the momentum can be maintained next season and spread to other clubs.

A special thanks to Mark Crease of Colinton & Del Sharratt of Galashiels for being so enthusiastic in helping make this happen.

National League: East region contributed 5 clubs out of 12 in the Mens League (ESC1 who were runners-up in a tight race with Newlands, ESC2, plus Colinton Castle & Grange). In the women's league, 3 of the 6 teams were from East clubs(ESC again runners up to Newlands, plus Grange and Edinburgh University Students).

Finance, Leagues, Juniors & SSRL: The relevant committee officers have submitted detailed reports & can answer any questions you might have. I was scheduled to meet with the former SSRL CEO about specifications for a Regional Development Manager(RDM) for East but this was overtaken by events. I note that SSRL have a current advertisement for East RDM but ESSRA have not been asked for input on this.

Knockout Cup: Thanks to David Coutts for developing this initiative and driving it forward. There were 22 teams divided into a Premiership, Championship & Chairman's cup. The finals were all played on Mar 28 in Edinburgh Sports Club prior to the awards dinner. ESC teams won the premiership & championship while a Watsonians combo won the Chairman's cup.

Awards Dinner: Another fantastic David Coutts innovation, 60 plays/partners/fans from the leagues and conference turned out in their best bib & tucker to acknowledge the winners, fill the cups & murder some songs in the Karaoke. Thanks to ESC for hosting with courts, food & craic.

The outlook: The ladies leagues are at a critical point, any further shrinkage due to the age profile could see the divisions collapse and unless we as players, clubs & region

can grow the female playing base, the existing younger players might not have team squash available to them in 5 years time.

The open leagues are further from this critical point but there is no room for complacency. The junior leagues are re-energised and can replace attrition of players in the coming years, but retention is key.

In short, all of the clubs must be as pro-active as possible with recruiting fresh membership. The East committee will help where possible but the ball is in our members courts. Apathy is not an option, that was sufficient in the boom years but like all other sports today, young people have many other options unless we re-invent ourselves for the modern era.

Acknowledgement: I must thank all the club reps and players who have contributed to an exciting season. The committee have been diligent in the amount of unseen work that they do communicating, executing and reviewing ideas and I think the membership should really give them a clap on the back for giving up their free time for the benefit of everyone.

*Christy Looby*

East of Scotland Squash & Racketball Association  
Jun 22, 2015