

Wirral Tennis League
Fixture Secretary Report 2015 for AGM

SUMMARY 2015: There were some close finishes for titles, promotions, relegations and playoffs. Many (11 positions for top/RU/bottom or playoff) were not decided until the last match. There are 9 titles at stake which were won by 8 different clubs. Hoylake won 2 divisions. Hoylake retained the championship and Prenton won the Mens championship for the 8th consecutive time. Thorndale were ladies champions.

Overall it has been quite a good season and we were very lucky with the weather causing hardly any matches (6 out of 474) to be rearranged. Again the introduction of the 3rd set match tie-break (made possible in a fair way by the scoring system) made a big contribution. Unfortunately there were still too many problems (78), some caused by clubs not referring to the rules. To repeat the comment from The Fixture Secretary's report at 1988 AGM "*Mr. Lydiate appealed to club representatives to know the rules and therefore avoid problems*". If any rule is unclear or unfair then propose a change to the rules or the wording. However the most disappointing problems were teams unable to fulfil fixtures either in part or full (48). The league has always done its best to promote competitive tennis (and been very accommodating in respect of very late entries and withdrawals) for as many as possible but in view of teams being unable to fulfil fixtures the league needs to consider only allowing teams that can fulfil fixtures.

TEAMS 2015: There were 72 teams entered the league (48 mixed, 20 Mens and 4 Ladies), equalling record number in 2013 (there were 50 teams in 2003). The mixed league did have a full complement of 6 divisions (8 teams per division). The men's league was reduced back to 2 divisions. The ladies league was run in the hope that there may be more teams in future and should continue while clubs enter.

TEAMS 2016: It would be good to expand the ladies league, and to return to 3 divisions in the mens league.

Early last season I suggested a Veterans league: open to any suggestions: day of week / mornings/afternoons / format eg over 55/60, men only/ladies only/mixed as winter, 2 cross over doubles etc. 2 clubs were interested. Email me if your club is interested and if enough interest?

PLAYOFFS & PRESENTATION: Thanks to Heswall for allowing the use of all their courts for the league's 3rd playoff day and their club for the presentation evening and specifically to the Heswall Ladies (Sylvia Reed, Sue Orrell & Julie Risely) for their hospitality, catering and general support. Also many thanks to committee members Sue Edwards & Louise Wilson-Jarvis for their invaluable help in making the day run as smoothly as it did. The day was blessed with very good weather which helped it go to schedule. There was some excellent play from teams in all divisions which showed how the standard of tennis in the league, particularly in the lower divisions, has improved. Surprisingly all the incumbents retained their place in their division. There were some very close matches, 2 9-7's a 10-6 and a 9-5 (Birkenhead2 won despite a ranking problem but helped by Neston being a man short).

It was disappointing that 6 clubs have not supported the Presentation evening in any of the last 3 years (Bertram, Birkenhead, Cheshire Oaks, Helsby, North Cheshire & Wallasey Manor – Neston have missed 2).

HONOURS 2015: Congratulations to all division winners and to teams gaining promotion and commiserations to teams relegated or losing in Playoffs.

Division	Winners	Runners up	Playoff	Relegated
1	Hoylake1: Many congratulations to Hoylake1 for taking the title for 3 rd consecutive year, They lost 1 st match at home to Heswall1, took the lead in week 3 with a big home win against Birkenhead and only lost 1 more match. However they still needed 10 points from last match to be certain and finished 16-0 at home to Hooton1	Heswall1: Finished 16 points behind Hoylake1. They won 1 less match than Hoylake and lost to Hoylake1, Prenton1 & Thorndale1. They move up 1 place from 2014. Over their 2 matches with Hoylake they lost 17 to 13.	Birkenhead1: were in playoff position from week2 and their fate looked certain from very early on despite big wins over the champions (Hoylake1) Thorndale1 and twice over Neston2, They suffered from availability but were able to put a strong team out now and again. Their playoff with WallaseyM1 went to the wire.	Neston2: Last year's division2 winners were bottom from the 1 st week and they looked certs for at best the playoffs from very early on having lost all 14 matches, The team they forced into the playoffs (Thorndale1) last year finished well above them.

Division	Winners	Runners up	Playoff	Relegated
2	Alderley1 had the division won with before the last match and only lost 1 match (to runners up WallaseyM1 at Wallasey). It is their 2 nd successive promotion and return to Division1 after 3 years.	WallaseyM1 had made the playoffs before the last match and only lost 1 (at Alderley1) and drew 1 (at Prenton2). Relegated last year after 15 years in Division1 they had the chance to return to via the playoffs but lost narrowly 9-7.	PSunlight1: looked favourites to be near the bottom from 1 st match. They won 2 (Hoylake2 & Neston3) but suffered from injuries and availability. They were 12 pts above Neston3 but could have been caught in last match. They narrowly won the playoff 9-7	Neston3: lost 13 matches but narrowly won the battle at the bottom beating PSunlight1 16.67-15.33. They only stayed out of playoffs last year by 7.33pts.
3	Upton1 having been comfortably relegated last year they return to division2 after successive relegations. The top 2 positions looked between Upton1 and Oxtonge1 (also relegated last year) from very early. After week 11 they were level and on paper Upton1 had the harder run in and needed 10.33pts in last match they beat Heswall3 12-4 to win by 5pts	Oxtonge1: were relegated last year through the playoffs by the narrowest of margins (literally 1pt in the match against Heswall2 could have saved them!). They narrowly won the aggregate against Upton1 17.33-14.67 and go into the playoffs losing narrowly 9-7 to PSunlight1	Thorndale3 have been in the playoff position since very early on but could have got out of it with a big win in either of their last 2 matches. They were promoted last year through the playoffs by beating Hoylake3 helped by Hoylake3 players no show (match finished 8-8 82-58). They had a much better 2 nd half of season by virtue of a realignment of players rankings and again narrowly beat Hoylake3 10-6	Bertram1 having finished 3 rd last year are relegated and they looked favourites for the drop from very early on. They finished 18.67pts behind a resurgent Thorndale3. They beat Thorndale3 in 1 st half and Thorndale2 in 2 nd half of season.
4	Pinewood1: together with Hoylake3 dominated from very early on and in the end won by the narrowest of margins (0.33) with the help of a Hoylake3 card error. In fairness both teams incurred 1 penalty pt.	Hoylake3: are again in the playoffs but this time it is to regain the position lost last year (see Thorndale3 above). They did not lose a match (drew with Neston4) and beat Pinewood1 twice with an aggregate of 17.67-13.33. Unfortunately a card error cost them the title and promotion. In a repeat of last year's playoff they had a full team this time but lost 10-6	Birkenhead2: despite winning 5 & drawing 1 they were always in the bottom 3 and with 1 game to go were only 2pts behind Hoylake4 who they beat 18.67-13.3. They finish 1 place lower than last year. Birkenhead2 won the despite a ranking problem but also thanks to Neston being a man short.	NCheshire1: were in the bottom 3 from week3 but could have saved themselves in the last match by beating Hoylake4 16-0. They beat Oxtonge2 at home and Neston4 and Hoylake4 away but lost final match at home to Hoylake4 14-2.
5	Heswall4: having stayed in the division by through the playoffs they went top after week4 and looked to have it won by week11 then leading by 27pts, They won all home games but lost 4 on the road including the final match at relegated Bertram2	Neston5 finished 4 th last year, lead the division early on and reached the playoffs needing only 5pts in their last match. They could follow their 4 th team who gained promotion through the same route last year, however being a man short cost them even though Birkenhead2 were penalised for a ranking problem	Pinewood2: promoted last year they were only 0.33pts behind Thorndale4 and with the deciding last match at home to Thorndale4 where they lost 10-6 with some very close rubbers. In match13 they lost all 5 match tiebreaks. The division was very close with only 13pts between 4 th & 8 th Pinewood2 comfortably beat Thorndale5 in the playoff.	Bertram2: suffer successive relegations and were bottom from early on in the season. However having won 7 & drawn 1 & with a 2 nd half of W5 D1 L1(narrowly) it is surprising they did not escape. Being short early on cost dear (only 2pts behind Pinewood)
6	Hooton2 having reentered a 2 nd team after their 1 st team withdrew 7 years ago they were top before the halfway stage and had the division won with 2 matches to go. They lost their 3 rd match and won their last 11 matches	Thorndale5 were relegated last year and may be considered fortunate to finish above WallaseyM3 by 0.67pt. Both teams won their last matches 16-0 and but for penalties the positions would have been reversed. Clubs not fulfilling fixtures also had a bearing.	Oxtonge3 PSunlight3 & Birkenhead4 will all have to apply for reelection because they were failing to fulfil the required number of fixtures (part or full). There will be proposals at 2015 AGM following discussions at WTL CM3 to expunge records and / or disqualify teams not able to fulfil fixtures because it can make a mockery of a league.	

Division	Winners	Runners up	Playoff	Relegated
Men 1	Prenton1 had the division won by week10 despite losing to Thorndale1. Prenton1 are still making this championship their own. It is their 8 th consecutive win. Who can stop them making it 9 next season?	Helsby1: In their 6 th season in the league they finish in their highest position just above Thorndale1 but nearly 40pts behind Neston1.	WallaseyM1 were a very comfortable 3 rd last year but were in the playoff position from half way. They failed to fulfil 3 fixtures by week8 and that means they will need to apply for reelection despite easily winning the playoff against Alderley1.	Oxton1 stayed in division1 through the playoffs but were bottom throughout the season having lost all 14 matches and will need to apply for reelection for failing to fulfil fixtures.
2	Hoylake1 bounce straight back to division1. Congratulations asthey were the only team in all competitions to win all their matches. In the 1 st division last year they drew2 and lost12. Let's hope for better things next year.	Alderley1 go into the playoffs for the 2 nd year in succession. The only matches they lost were to Hoylake1. They finished comfortably behind Hoylake1 and comfortably above WallaseyM2 but easily lost the playoff against WallaseyM1	Upton2 were well behind 3 rd bottom Bertram1 and will need to seek reelection because of not fulfilling fixtures. They did win at Bertram1 and drew at NCheshire1	Oxton2 withdrew early on in the season and their record was expunged.
Ladies 1	Thorndale1 won by 5.33pts and a significant difference was that Thorndale1 won 9.33-6.67 over the 2 matches with runners up Oxton1	Oxton1 were runners up again having lost out by only 6pts last year.		Oxton2 lost all 6 matches including 3 conceded. Technically they need to apply for reelection but as more teams are needed?

RELECTION: Teams needing to seek reelection:

Birkenhead4 - bottom of division 6 & failing to fulfil fixtures

PSunlight3- failing to fulfil fixtures

Oxton3 - failing to fulfil fixtures

WallaseyM1 men - failing to fulfil fixtures (for 2nd successive year)

Oxton2 men – bottom of divison2 because of withdrawing and failing to fulfil fixtures.

Upton2 men - failing to fulfil fixtures

Oxton2 Ladies - bottom of division 1 ladies and failing to fulfil fixtures

CHANGES 2015: Changes introduced for season 2015:

Default to play 3rd set match tiebreak for all rubbers in match unless captains agree to play full 3rd sets before start of match.

TEAM CHANGES 2015:

New teams: Mixed: Hooton2 Pinewood3
Men: Upton2

Ladies: Oxton2

Deleted teams: Mixed: Oxton4

Withdrawn teams: Mens: Oxton2

FIXTURES 2015: Special fixture requirements: All special requirements requested were accommodated (E.g. 1st & 2nd teams at home at same time). If you have any special requirements then ensure I receive them before the end of the year and I will do my best to accommodate you.

WEBSITE: The website (www.wirraltennisleague.org) has received more hits than ever.

I have been discussing electronic entering of scorecards with The LTA and they are hopeful that they can accommodate our scoring system for the start of next season.

There may be a requirement for all players to be BT members (free to all club members) and points would need to be trebled to avoid fractions (e.g. instead of 2-0 it would be 6-0 and instead of 2-1 (currently 1.33-0.67) it would be 4-2.

The website has continued to provide timely access to league information for all with:

Up to date league tables	Up to date results	Fixtures
Sunset times	Rearranged match details	Floodlight usage
Registrations	Rankings	Rules
Standard penalty tariffs	Problems	Committee
Club contacts	Links to member club websites	Committee decisions (mainly re problems)
History of league	History of all previous years league tables	Minutes of Committee meetings & AGM
News	Club location map and club addresses/telephone numbers	Statistics on every team's final positions (progress?) each year
All result cards from start of 2003	Link to West Cheshire Winter league	Photos from Playoffs, Presentations and clubs.

Matt Webb has also set up a Facebook page which has already generated quite a bit of interest.

- Please advise me if there is anything else you would like to see on website
- If any club would like photos published then email them to me, especially the division winners & runners up
- I will also be happy to email any of the photos on the website. Just email me which photo

PROBLEMS 2015: Not good. Back up to 79 from 68 (49 in 2011). There were 47 matches (out of 474) where teams did not fulfil part or full fixture (including no show). To run any sport in a competitive environment requires a degree of organisation / commitment and administration. I think the league & clubs receive that from the WTL committee and therefore it is reasonable for the league and committee to expect a higher level of organisation & commitment from the clubs. There was some improvement from last season except for unfulfilling fixtures. It is not good enough to say "I just want to play tennis" – that cannot happen for all, some members of every club must organise! If clubs do not want to play and commit to a well organised and fair league then they can arrange friendlies!

The 2015 problems analysed were (brackets show 2014 & 2013 data):

	Mixed	Men	Ladies	Total	Comments
Not fulfil fixture	4(0 5)	10(8 7)	2(0 1)	15(8 13)	Very disappointing particularly mixed and the league must consider what course of action. Mens is contributed by matches being on different days of week
Not fulfil part fixture	25(5 16)	2(6 2)	1(0 0)	28(11 18)	
Player not show	4(2 4)			4(2 4)	No shows show a lack of organisation. Very unfair on the opposition who are committed to the match. Perhaps clubs should consider more those players who are reliable
Incorrect card	6(5 6)	3(8 11)		9(13 17)	Shows a lack of consideration when completing a simplish result card for which every club has a sample.
Ranking	4(2 3)	0(2 0)		4(4 3)	Shows poor organisation or communication (pre ranking is available)
Registration	3(5 5)	0(6 4)		3(11 9)	Shows poor organisation (it is a very simple registration procedure and much simpler than many sports). It may be more strict next year if electronic results are used.
Playing twice in same week		0(1 3)	1(0 0)	1(1 3)	Better
Late card	8(6 4)	0(5 6)		8(11 10)	Shows lack of consideration / organisation (there were also late card appeals upheld). Result cards can be emailed subject to certain specifications
Rearranged date not advised	0(2 1)	1(1 0)		1(3 1)	Shows poor organisation (rules are very clear)
3rd set tiebreak & full set	1(2)			1(2)	In rules and summary printed on result cards
Unplayed rubbers recorded as played	0(1 0)			0(1 0)	Severe penalty. 2014 AGM increased penalty.

FIXTURE SECRETARY / WEBMASTER: I have been Fixture Secretary for 13 years and there has now been a website for 13 years.

REGISTRATIONS: I will leave the registrations on website, so for next season please maintain them by advising of players who have left your club in addition to new registrations. When registering a player ensure they are not registered with any other club (which would mean a transfer and requires at least 48 hours' notice to both Fixture Secretary & ALL previous clubs contacts). It maybe that they must be BT Members from next season?
NB Rule 6.1 & 10.1: All players must be bona fide playing members.

CONTACTS: Ensure your contacts are up to date otherwise your club could miss significant communication.

LEAGUE HISTORY: If you know of any history e.g. officers of the league please let me know. Does anyone know how the league rankings were determined in 1984 & 1985 (see website)?

THANKS: I thank the committee for their support and wish all clubs an enjoyable, successful and let's make it a problem free 2016 season. Please ensure your club and members are aware of the rules. They are there to try and ensure fairness for all. If you do not agree with or find anything unclear then please propose a change or clarification to the wording.

CONSIDER:

1. Playoffs / presentation evening 2016 – Saturday 3rd September – venue?
2. 3rd set match tiebreak only. No option to play full sets.
3. Mens & Ladies League: Sunday division and a Wednesday or Thursday division
4. Expunging records of teams not fulfilling the equivalent of 3 matches,

Geoff Dewhurst
Fixture Secretary
Wirral Tennis League
October 2015