

Southgate Squash and Racketball Club

Chairman's Note – May 2008

Almost 6 months since I last wrote to you after the AGM and lots going on. I would love to write these more often but we are all very busy and life seems to get more hectic not less. And we all need time to play squash or racketball!!!! Apologies that this is so long – I have grouped in sections so you can look though the headings and read what interests you.

Club

Your committee and other volunteers have been very busy running the club. We are in the early stages having taken over from the Trust just last October for subscriptions and late January for court usage. We have a newly designed web-site thanks to volunteer 'webmaster' Dave Griffiths who is also maintaining it for us and it is regularly updated. We have had quite a few new members via this route. Check out the latest SSRC news www.southgatesquashclub.co.uk and use this to get to the online booking system.

More courts are being booked and we have gained 31 new members so far. Though we could still do with a few more as Membership is down compared to last year. If any of you have friends or relatives that have the slightest interest do encourage them to come along to try us out. I hope you are all aware that non - members can come along to club night up to 6 times before they are encouraged to join us and there is a reward for anyone introducing full paying members to the club: [4 free courts for a new single or family membership.](#)

Leagues

The squash leagues seem to have settled at a lower number of entries than previous years – so a plea here to you all to start getting competitive again and join up now – lots of (well 31) new people for you all to meet!!!! Thanks to Terry Feller for continuing to run them.

The racketball however is getting more popular. I guess more of us (older players) are moving to racketball as it does appear to be less stressful on the ageing body parts!! Thanks to Pauline for continuing to run this league.

Finance

The financials are on track and after 2 years of downward spiral the income is showing a very small upturn – due to players paying correct fees, visitor fees and the 'no pay no play' court policy and additional usage by public, non-SSRC organisations and coaching court fees. Still a way to go to get back to a reasonable income level that will ensure we can support the facilities but we will have enough money to complete all the urgent repairs that we assessed earlier this year. This year will be the first year in many where we will pay the England Squash subs early and actually get a discount!!!

Communication – please let us know your thoughts, suggestions – this is your club!

Communication between us all appears to have improved. Mainly because most of you completed new membership forms and we now a reasonably correct database: still some problems with non-deliverable email but more likely due to spam stoppers. To try to keep costs down we are using email as the first communication. If you are one of the few people who do not use email your correspondence is left on the board in sealed envelopes (if private) or as an open to all notice. If it is really important it is mailed to your home address. So you do need to keep your details updated.

We are also putting some important notes on the Welcome and login screens of the system.

Club information is now available on-line at the website, on the EBS and in the SSRC Book kept at the club near the touch screen. And if you want to contact us use the ssrccommittee@yahoo.co.uk email or notes on the board.

EBS

The electronic system went live in the last week of January and we have now had just 2+ months experience. Lorna painstakingly entered all the data and original club rules and after a couple of hiccups it seems to have settled down. Many thanks to Pat, Steve and Lynda for helping the changeover go so well and to Vickie and Nick for helping when SECpay could not get setup in time for the start date. Members are using the system easily and lots of you have moved to the on-line secure payment system - that helps us keep administration to a minimum. Please can you try to pay us on-line or by cheque we need to move to cashless to reduce costs and admin.

Here is a brief review of the system highlights (or lowlights) depending on your viewpoint.

The initial objective / remit from January 2007 following AGM 2006:

Introduce an Online Booking System for Southgate Squash & Racketball Club (Walker Ground Cricket Trust), incorporating a members database. This is to improve the financial, security, control and communications within SSRC / Walker Ground

Several options were considered by in-house development and external software applications. The latter with Globus Data Ltd was the chosen company (as used by all local – and many national- clubs). A delay was incurred due to the requirement of a full-blown written justifying document (on notice board) and membership approval via an EGM (Obtained October 2007). The system was trialled, tested by members and the basic Booking and Admin modules installed. The Light Control module and SECpay Online payment facility were installed and working in March.

Members were informed either via email or letter (posted / on notice board) of their Account nos and pin code. All members have been / are advised to change pin codes ensuring security and self-control / access to own accounts.

The existing SSRC Rules (see attached reminder if you have forgotten them) have been enforced by System, Administrators and Committee to ensure a Fair for All policy. The mandatory naming of your opponent will be introduced after 1 July. Audit trails of court booking ensures no misuse (esp. visitor/public use). A monthly log file show a breakdown of usage and that is reported back to the Trust with their assessment payments.

We will hold a review of the system after 3 months operation where we will report progress and issues in more detail and you will have an opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions. This is scheduled for Thursday **17 July**. We have already received lots of good comments and some not so good.

Below is a list of issues still to be addressed:

1. A few member email addresses rejected/reject the ssrca8min@yahoo.co.uk (held in their Spam area) with the result that they did not receive details (no delivery failure received by sender).
2. Touch screen – broadband connection not 100% reliable (box replaced) – now cable and service provider being looked at to replace.
3. System's provider network corrupted – loss of system for all users (not just SSRC) for less than 24 hours.
4. Encourage more users to utilise online payment facility – SECpay – to reduce administration overhead.
5. EBS Advertising – not taken up – yet.
6. Light Control – physical connections - being added to Courts 1 + 2
7. Mandatory opponent feature or visitor payment active after 1 July.

There are a few advertising opportunities for banners on the booking website, these are offered to members first. So if any of you have a company that could benefit from reaching the whole squash membership then please contact ssrccommittee@yahoo.co.uk or any of the committee members. A prominent banner will cost approximately £250 for a years display. Please contact Lorna she might do you a deal!!!!.

Maintenance

We have had lots of maintenance issues to catch up on and the Committee and volunteers are doing their best to keep on top of it until the end of June when some major works can start.

So far, courts 2, 3 and 4 have been sanded and the balcony above 3 & 4 painted – thanks to volunteers led by Rob Draper. Lights have been replaced on many courts – thanks to Nick Teeling and his volunteers. The gas heaters have been serviced – court 1's is dead as some of you have found out recently with the cold spell!!

We have completed a full assessment of works to be done, including some external work that the Trust needs to address. Hoping the weather will keep dry for the next month or so that you no longer need to play in wellies and raincoats on courts 1 & 2. Estimates are in for consideration. We have agreed a contract to replace the front walls on courts 5 & 6. Work is due to take place in early July. Court 1 will get an overhaul so it should be up to scratch for the start of next season. Courts 2.5 & 6 will be sanded and we will go on replacing lights on all courts as needed until we can afford to replace each court with a low maintenance system.

It looks like we will just be able to afford these essential internal works using our share of the income that we now get as part of our agreement with the Trust. Please continue to report problems as you notice them preferably by email to ssrccommittee@yahoo.co.uk or to any committee member.

The Walker Trust

You are all aware of the Walker Trusts financial problems. We continue to work with them to rectify the situation and several large family events are planned for this year. All the user clubs and members have a part to play in ensuring the Walker Ground continues to function so continue to use the facilities and encourage friends and family to join in.

It is still important to note that the SSRC committee believes that with our new relationship with the trust their current financial situation should have no impact on our membership's ability to go on playing squash/racketball at the Walker Ground for the foreseeable and even long term future.

The Trustees are encouraging new events and other activities at the grounds to help with the finances. The Adelaide room has been re-decorated and kitted out with whiteboards, etc. to host meetings. It is available for hire and catering can even be supplied. Check with the Walker Ground website for more information.

Redevelopment

I previously told you that the Trustees have no immediate plans for any re-development of the grounds. It is still the case that going forward, new plans may be considered but this will be with the full involvement of ALL the user clubs including the SSRC and with the correct Charity Commission procedures in place.

Tournament

Nick did a grand job of organising the tournaments this year. Not so many squash entries but again the racketball was very well subscribed in every category – can I see a pattern here? I understand you all had a great time on finals night with Alison Waters who was guest of honour after winning the National Championship.

Team Squash

2nd team won their league – congratulations. And the other teams put up a good fight. If you want any further information or would like to play for any of the Southgate teams please contact Nick Teeling at NickTeeling@aol.com or 08704 432929 or Mob 07976 753197.

We would like to be able to enter a Women's team this year so looking for budding talent, willing to travel miles to away games, have fun at home games. Contact:: ssrccommittee@yahoo.co.uk.

Junior squash at Southgate is always strong and again we have 3 teams, one in each U/13 U/16 and U/19 age groups. The U19's won the Middx tournament yet again!!! These games are played on Sunday afternoons. If there are any juniors out there that are not playing for the teams already and would like to be considered, please contact me at: lindseyd50@yahoo.co.uk or 0208 444 5539.

Everyone is welcome to come and watch and support any of these team matches and a full list of fixtures will be published on the notice boards.

Coaching

We now have 3 active, young, fit coaches: Chris Sherman – level 3, Lucy Colt and Craig Empson – level 2. Chris and Lucy both offer private regular coaching sessions to juniors. Chris on Saturday mornings and Friday evenings. Lucy on Wednesday afternoons and occasional other slots. Adults can also get coaching from them by arrangement. Sarah's regular Saturday afternoon coaching continues to be well subscribed but if you have any budding stars (who knows? Alison is home grown from age 5 at these very same sessions!) then get them on the waiting list. Lorna Empson, Vickie Prow and Lynda Colt also qualified as racketball coaches. If you need more details contact each coach directly or via ssrccommittee@yahoo.co.uk. Thanks to our other coaches Rob Lowry, Pete Empson who regularly help run teams, coach juniors for free on Sunday afternoons and run tournaments for us.

Events

We had a great quiz night back in January – thanks to Terry Feller, Lorna Empson and many others for organising.

We will not hold a summer party this year as the Walker Trust is organising a Music and picnic event on Sunday 6 July. SSRC will run the Pimms tent. Do come along with all your friends and family. Buy tickets from us or mention SSRC when purchasing elsewhere – we get a small share to go towards our social fund.

I must thank our social committee and the many volunteers for all their hard work and I hope you will continue to support them in the coming year as other events get planned. Some to look forward to: **racketball evenings** with one of Al Hutch's famous bar-b-q's, **Christmas party** if enough interest and we might have another quiz night. Watch for details at the club and on the web-sites. If you have an idea for an event why not let us know or even better run it yourself? We are always looking for volunteers!!!

AGM

The AGM is now going to be held in October. Details to follow separately nearer the time.

If anyone would like to contact me or any committee member, ask questions, express any views please use this email address: ssrccommittee@yahoo.co.uk or snail mail on the board at the club. I am usually around for club night on Mondays.

Lastly play well and keep booking those courts!!!

Lindsey Dack
Chairman

Committee: **Guy Pethybridge/Steve Illidge - Treasurer**
 Nick Teeling - Club Captain
 Pauline Lowry – Racketball/Ladies Representative
 Kevin Greene – Juniors
 Vickie Prow – Events, Grants, Membership

EBS Administrator: **Lorna Empson**