

Henley Squash Club – Chairman’s News Letter

End of the Year, End of an Era

This autumn has been a busy squash period, the club has done well in external events but has been a little quiet on the home front.

Oxfordshire Leagues: 1st Team has had a good run in Division 1 but in the last reckoning was pipped to first place by Wallingford, hopefully they will be able to go one better in the spring. The **2nd Team** started well and soon were established at the top of the 3rd division, mostly as a result of being able to field a stable team each week. University were second in the division and we played them in the penultimate match with a weakened team and lost 5:0, putting University within range. In the final match against Paramount we were missing our top 3 players but despite losing 5:0 we gathered enough points together to win the division, the margin just 3 points 190/187, with Paramount just a further 7 points behind. The **3rd Team** struggled and came bottom of Division 4 but still enjoyed themselves! The **Vets Team** have been struggling with several members injured, they are in the relegation zone in division 1, hopefully in the second half better results can lift them up the table.

In the new year the 2nds will have to play well in division 2 and hopefully can be strengthened to achieve a mid-table result or better, while the 3rds will hopefully have a more consistent team and better results.

The club **Internal Leagues** continue to be well supported with 8 divisions, so over 40 players representing 50% of the club. However, we have lost players from the top through illness, injury and work commitments. In the new year we hope to recruit these top players back.

Saturday **Club Nights** have been poorly attended, but the courts remain available and several of us have had good sessions. I would encourage as many as possible to attend, it is a chance to play for free and play a wide range of opponents.

It is with sadness that our **Head Coach Ross Gore**, is moving on, Ross has presided over bringing a number of junior players through from introduction to the sport all the way to top level players. Ross has been asked to become head coach at St Clare’s girls school in Oxford a new challenge and closer to home too. Those who have benefitted from his skill both Junior and Senior will be very sad to see him go. On the brighter side Ross has introduced the Club to **Kristen Johnson** a squash professional with an excellent track record to replace him.

I am delighted that Kristen will be joining Henley as Head Coach from January and will be providing some taster sessions as well as taking over Ross’ clients in the new year.

Kristen is Oxfordshire born and bred and Roger Booker managed him when he was in the Oxfordshire U19s. He played for Oxfordshire men’s team with Simon Street and they contested a couple of county finals together, with Kristen coming out on top. Kristen left the UK to go on the professional squash tour, getting to a career high ranking of 160, so he is no mean player. For the club however, his other achievements of successfully running a large sports club in Ottawa and then a squash club in Bermuda are more important. In Bermuda Kristen established a highly successful programme for Juniors that he is keen to replicate here in Henley.

Kristen said, “it’s an honour to be able to become Henley’s head squash coach! I bring with me bags of enthusiasm and experience to share with you all. I am very much looking forward to the new year so we can all keep improving!”

Kristen is keen and proactive, and I hope many of you will take a moment to meet him and benefit from his coaching. I certainly will.

If you have been wavering about re-joining the leagues please do so in the New Year, look out for the free taster sessions that are coming and encourage any Juniors you know to take up the sport. They will be well looked after.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy and Squashful New Year *David*

