

Report to the AGM & EGM held by Wiltshire Squash on April 27 2015

You'll excuse me if I reflect slightly during the next few minutes, my apologies as I realise that it's a long agenda and I myself cannot stay much beyond now. However, I feel it only right that, in what is my last report to the AGM as Chairman, or recent ex Chairman to be precise, that I look back a little on the almost 10 years that have elapsed since I took over the chair from Dave Lorrain back in September 2005. And give just a couple of thoughts for the future.

I was convinced, by others, that the role of Chair wasn't an onerous one and largely this has proved to be the case although I suspect at times that I have probably made more of it than others would have done. I don't apologise for this as I firmly believe that, if you going to do something, you should do it as best you see fit. I guess it is for others to decide how effective I have been!

That said, there are a number of things that I believe I can look back on with satisfaction and maybe the single biggest one is simply that we are here tonight with, still, a reasonable number of teams competing in the county leagues. Whilst not quite as many as 10 years ago it is to the credit of all concerned that we still have the number we do, some of you will be aware that there have been times when it looked like, as some other counties have done, that we would be seriously considering stopping the leagues.

Another area to highlight is the recent progress that has been made with the Juniors. I will touch on this again in a moment but for a good part of my time as Chair we had no Junior section. Now we have a number of young people playing squash, some every week in the leagues, and I would commend the work that has and is being done. We may lose some when they grow up but we need them to be encouraged and nurtured for reasons that we all understand.

I also believe that we have been strong when it comes to blatant mis-behaviour. Again I will touch a little on this in a moment but I don't believe that there are many counties who have been anywhere near as strong as we have been and certainly recent events have brought home the fact that, previously, we have far exceeded the type of sanctions that the ESR would impose.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to comment on the inter-county sides. During my term we have seen us put sides out on a regular basis and my thanks to all those concerned. And we have held our own on a number of occasions at all age group levels. However, from a purely selfish point of view, I must just mention the highlight that was the Over 50's reaching the national finals in January 2012. I would urge anyone who enjoys their inter county squash to strive and get to this finals weekend, it really was great fun!

Enough of that I hear you say. It is with much regret that I find myself no longer Chairman, especially in the way that matters came to a head around Christmas. Irrespective of the circumstances that caused the disruption, and there were some valid arguments on either side of the fence, it was the unfortunate way in which people acted that frankly drove me to call it a day. Without wishing to upset anyone it really did get to the stage where grown men, who should know much better, ending up acting like spoilt children which, ultimately, undermined both the committee and in particular myself I felt as Chair. Mike Hyland at the time commented "*I honestly never thought that as a county we would ever descend into the petty squabbling we appear to be surrounded by at the moment. All anyone wants to do here is play squash*". An excellent summary I feel.

My comment when resigning was *“From my point of view, however, I am now left in a position of massive disappointment and frustration. Since November 14 I have had to deal almost daily, and on a number of occasions several times during that day, issues surrounding Wiltshire Squash. These issues are, I believe, things that could have been avoided and the way that some people have gone about matters has undermined greatly the position of the Wiltshire Committee”*.

So, what of the future? Despite the previous 2 sets of comments we are blessed with a small group of people who are committed to their squash and are prepared to commit time and effort to the cause. And I'd like to thank both them as well as those who have supported me over the last 10 years, especially Mike Hyland, Howard Wilson, Clive Morgan and Dean Watkins. Not forgetting Derek Bray who acted as league secretary through almost all the time of my chairmanship.

It is vital, however, that the load is spread and more are needed to build on what is already here, or risk losing it. The more that are involved, the less there is for each one to do. One good example is the Juniors where some further support especially with regards to coaching could lend significant benefits. It's been great to see a couple of younger players about over the last 12 months or so, all credit to them and their families but more are needed.

One thing that I have been keen to be involved in and promote is a greater working relationship between the County Associations and the Governing Body and it has been a pleasure to represent you at the ESR council meetings as well as assist other counties in formulating thoughts as to how this may work in the future. Probably the biggest regret I have in leaving the post now is that I go just as ESR look like they are putting together something significant with regards to greater involvement with the counties. I would be very happy, on your behalf, to continue to do this if you wanted me to. To quote more from a previous e-mail, *“I have, as I'm sure you will appreciate, not taken this decision lightly. Following on from the ESR council meeting a few weeks ago, I was very much looking forward to working with Keir Worth, the new Chief Executive, and the other County Associations in moving a sport that I love dearly forward.*

Finally, yes finally you'll be please to know, I would just like to return to what I believe the reason is that we play each week. Fun. Nothing more, nothing less. Once it doesn't become fun, we will stop doing it. I understand and accept that we need to promote and uphold the best of behaviour but we must also accept that not everyone can be a saint all of the time and occasional lapses will occur, even from the most patient of us. Please be understanding of this, accepting of our individual human frailties and ensure that it continues to be fun.

Thank you for your patience

Mike Stannard