

## **BDTTL AGM 2022: Fixture Secretary's Report**

### **Clubs and Players**

Since 2017, the league's number of players has fallen from 229 to 188. Covid may have been the main cause of this decrease, but clubs should be looking at ways to increase their sizes in the coming seasons if the league is to continue to thrive. Junior coaching is one thing we should be encouraging but senior coaching initiatives are also likely to produce league players, as evidenced by the success of Bat & Chat in Chelmsford.

Twenty-nine teams entered the league this year. Nine teams requested division 1, twelve teams requested division 1 and eight teams requested division 3. To avoid strong teams in division 3 and avoid forcing teams that had strongly indicated a preference for division 2 into division 1, the committee decided to continue with four smaller divisions rather than three divisions of roughly ten teams. The management committee will review this decision for next season and clubs' views are welcome on whether three or four divisions is preferable.

**Blackwater** continues to attract new players with eighteen players in three teams. Kath Little and her band of helpers have done a remarkable job with this club.

**Burnham** currently fields a single team of five regular players. It would be worth the league supporting any venture to encourage more players from a town of this size.

**Cold Norton** have expanded this season with an extra team in division 1. Cold Norton has twenty-three players across four teams.

**Fambridge** field a single team in the league and it is difficult to see this club moving to two teams. It fielded nine players this season.

**Maldon** fielded six teams with just thirty-one players thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Shirley Carroll in a challenging year for the club. Some more players next season would really help the club.

**Mapledene** show signs of recovering thanks to the work of Anthon Ranjit-Singh despite several of their players having moved to Cold Norton this season.

**St Lawrence** have a good club infrastructure that is currently providing fifteen players in their two teams. It would be great to see a St Lawrence C one day. The club shows how having a good social table tennis club can attract new players into the league.

**West Maldon** has faltered since Glen Laing left the area and although nineteen players signed on for the club, only a handful could commit to more than half a dozen matches. The club fielded just two teams this season, half its more normal four teams and even these teams have struggled to fulfil fixtures this season and finished low in their divisions. With a good venue capable of holding three matches, decent tables, and the potential to run junior and adult coaching sessions, it would be worth the league finding ways to support this club.

**Woodham** has restarted its successful junior coaching sessions. There is hope this initiative will boost the twenty-five players currently playing in four teams. All eyes on Head Coach Alan Dadswell!

## League Administration

### Postponements

As for the administration of the league, Eamonn Hall worked hard all season to load the match results and update re-arranged fixtures. He has reported that the speed at which captains agreed new match dates was frustratingly slow. Clubs and captains are to note that the Fixture Secretary requires new match dates within 7 days:

9.1. *Terms of Postponement:* Postponement of matches shall not be permitted except in the following circumstances: (i) team players have been called upon to represent the league; (ii) the match venue has been allocated for use by the league; (iii) extreme weather conditions impede travel for the match; (iv) the match venue is unavailable for reasons outside the home club's control; (v) the fixture is scheduled for a bank holiday; or (vi) in exceptional circumstances by agreement between both team captains and with the prior approval of the Fixture Secretary. Where a match is postponed, a new date must be agreed between both teams and communicated to the Fixture Secretary within 7 days of the original match date or else the Fixture Secretary shall have the right to refuse a postponement.

This year there were twenty-six postponed matches. Here were the reasons given:

#### DIVISION 1

1. POSTPONED: - MAPLEDENE COULD NOT FIELD A SIDE
2. POSTPONED: - UNAVAILABLE PLAYERS
3. POSTPONED: - POSITIVE COVID RESULTS rule 9.1 (vi)
4. POSTPONED: - POSTPONED
5. POSTPONED: - ILLNESS IN STOW TEAM rule 9.1 (vi)
6. POSTPONED: - ILLNESS rule 9.1 (vi)

#### DIVISION 2

7. POSTPONED: - POSTPONED BY MALDON C
8. POSTPONED: - WOODHAM B CLASH rule 9.1 (vi)
9. POSTPONED: - VENUE UNAVAILABLE - EMERGENCY WORKS IN DRAPERS CHASE rule 9.1 (iv)
10. POSTPONED: - POSTPONED
11. POSTPONED: - POSTPONED BY HOME TEAM
12. POSTPONED: - UNAVAILABLE PLAYERS FOR AWAY TEAM

#### DIVISION 3

13. POSTPONED: - AWAY TEAM POSTPONED - NOT ENOUGH PLAYERS
14. POSTPONED: - UNAVAILABLE PLAYERS
15. POSTPONED: - CHANGE VENUE rule 9.1 (iv)
16. POSTPONED: - UNAVAILABLE PLAYERS
17. POSTPONED: - COVID IN CAMP rule 9.1 (vi)
18. POSTPONED: - COVID AT STOW rule 9.1 (vi)
19. POSTPONED: - POSTPONED BY WOODHAM
20. POSTPONED: - ILLNESS rule 9.1 (vi)

#### DIVISION 4

21. POSTPONED: - UNAVAILABLE PLAYERS
22. POSTPONED: - UNAVAILABLE PLAYERS
23. POSTPONED: - VENUE UNAVAILABLE - EMERGENCY WORKS IN DRAPERS CHASE rule 9.1 (iv)
24. POSTPONED: - COVID IN WOODHAM TEAM rule 9.1 (vi)
25. POSTPONED: - UNAVAILABLE PLAYERS - AGREED BY BOTH TEAMS
26. POSTPONED: - ST LAWRENCE UNABLE TO FIELD TEAM DUE TO COVID rule 9.1 (vi)
27. POSTPONED: - AGREED RESCHEDULE

Rule 9.1 (iv) explicitly covers three of these reasons (9, 15 and 23) i.e., those where the venue was unexpectedly unavailable. All others rely on the Fixture Secretary agreeing with the clubs that

exceptional circumstances meant the match should be postponed (rule 9.1 (vi)). In this time of Covid, Eamonn and I agreed any reason which may be Covid related (3, 5, 6, 17, 18, 20, 24 and 26). One other reason about a fixture clash (8) was agreed but of the twenty-seven postponements, twelve were within the rules. The other fifteen reasons were vague or because of unavailable players, which should not be agreed as postponements. However, if **both captains** had agreed the postponement, the Fixture Secretary agreed to help reduce the number of adjudicated matches. So, whether the rule needs updating to reflect this policy or whether the members would prefer the existing rule to be more strictly adhered to might require discussion.

### Late Applications

Three players applied to join the league after the cut-off date of 1<sup>st</sup> February. The Fixture Secretary and the Chairman considered all requests. The first application was from a player that stated their main reason was to qualify for the league tournament. The application was rejected. Another player applied to join a division 1 team to help them field sides. This application was rejected as well because the player was strong and might change the outcome of the top division. The third application was from a junior player based in Chelmsford who wanted to help Maldon field teams in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> division. This application was accepted for the following reasoning: Maldon had been struggling to field full sides and the league needs more juniors (it was hoped this might represent the start of the many juniors playing in Chelmsford League playing in our league). The decision turned out to have unfortunate repercussions as a Maldon team put him out against one of the league's top sides, Woodham A and the junior took three points (two singles and the doubles) from this team when they were in a close fight with St Lawrence for the top spot. This did cause frustration in the Woodham team and that did cause Alan and I to wonder whether we had made the right decision.

The rule is:

5.5. *Applications:* Applications for the registration of new players during a current season will be accepted up to and including 1st February. Only in exceptional circumstances will the executive Committee consider applications after this date.

We feel we applied that rule fairly and without any ill-purpose, but the management committee will review our decisions and decide whether the rule requires alteration.

### Season Results

Divisions 1, 2 and 3 each had seven teams and division 4 had eight teams. Each team played every other team 3 times during the season. 297 fixtures were scheduled for the season with four unplayed and requiring adjudication. Thirty-five matches were postponed.

Division 1		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	Fambridge A	18	16	0	2	146	34	146
2	Cold Norton B	18	12	3	3	113	67	113
3	Cold Norton A	18	10	2	6	110	70	110
4	Mapledene A	18	10	2	6	102	78	102
5	Cold Norton C	18	6	1	11	55	125	55
6	Maldon A	18	1	3	14	53	127	53
7	Stow Maries A	18	2	1	15	51	129	51

Fambridge won the league with 146 points. Daniel Anderson's team did very well to just pip Cold Norton A to second place and Mapledene A were not far behind in fourth place.

Cold Norton C, Maldon A and Stow Maries A all found division 1 tough this year and this division recorded the highest standard deviation of 37 places around a mean-average points total of 90.

John Poysden (95.65%) and Keith Adams (93.10%) stood out as players winning over 90% of their matches. Of the sixty-nine fixtures played, none were adjudicated and six were postponed making division 1 the smoothest running division this year.

Division 2		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	Woodham B	18	12	2	4	117	63	117
2	Woodham A	18	12	5	1	113	59	113
3	Mapledene B	18	6	7	5	92	88	92
4	Maldon B	18	8	1	9	87	93	87
5	Stow Maries B	18	8	1	9	84	96	84
6	Maldon C	18	2	2	14	62	110	62
7	West Maldon A	18	3	6	9	59	105	59

The two top Woodham teams were scrapping all through the season to see who would win. In the end, the players with the best averages (Sanjay Saptarshi of Woodham (86.21%) and Dan Piglet of Woodham A (82.86%)) personified their teams' performances as Woodham B just pushed past Woodham A in their final match.

Mapledene B fielded thirteen players this season, three more than the Woodham teams combined, and this shifting side may have been part of the reason for their third place. Maldon B and Stow Maries B were not far behind but both Maldon C and West Maldon A struggled this year – West Maldon A conceding twice and using twelve players over the season in desperate efforts to send full teams to matches.

It was the closest of the divisions with a standard deviation of 22 points across a mean-average of 88 points. Two matches had to be adjudicated and six were postponed.

Division 3		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	Blackwater A	18	12	6	0	126	54	126
2	Cold Norton D	18	11	5	2	114	65	114
3	Woodham C	18	11	4	3	111	69	111
4	Stow Maries D	18	6	6	6	85	95	85
5	Stow Maries C	18	3	3	12	73	106	73
6	West Maldon B	18	4	2	12	61	111	61
7	Maldon D	18	2	2	14	51	121	51

Division 3 was won by Blackwater A, who will be looking forward to next year's Division Two for the first time. The club has blossomed in recent years and has lodged itself firmly as an important club in the league.

Top of the averages were Peter Chastin of Stow Maries D (80.95%), Peter Lucraft of Cold Norton D (79.59%), Luca Bailey of Woodham C (78.13%) and the spinniest of defenders Ken Sheard of Stow Maries C (77.27%). Denis Balic, Roger Slade, and Alan Scammell didn't finish as the division's top players, but they weren't far off, all finishing over 70%.

Maldon D's relegation will mean 3 Maldon teams in the bottom division next year. There was 1 adjudication and 8 postponed matches amongst the 69 fixtures.

<b>Division 4</b>		<b>P</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1	St Lawrence A	21	16	2	3	150	60	150
2	Woodham D	21	18	1	2	146	64	146
3	Burnham A	21	11	1	9	112	98	112
4	Blackwater B	21	11	2	8	109	101	109
5	Blackwater C	21	9	2	10	105	105	105
6	Maldon F	21	6	3	12	85	117	85
7	Maldon E	21	6	1	14	80	130	80
8	St Lawrence B	21	1	0	20	45	157	45

Division 4 had an exciting finish with St Lawrence just finishing ahead of Woodham D to take first spot. Looking back to 2015-16, St Lawrence sat at the bottom of the lowest division in 10<sup>th</sup> place with just 47 points, in 2016-17 they came 8<sup>th</sup>, then in 2017-18, 7<sup>th</sup> before dropping to 9<sup>th</sup> in 2019 then getting 6<sup>th</sup> in 2020 so there has been a steady improvement but it looks like this year St Lawrence A will experience the next division for the first time. Well done.

Woodham D battled well all season and Michael Burton took third spot in the division's averages with 87.30%. Steve King of St Lawrence A (92.68%) and Michael Pratley of Burnham (90.57%) both got over 90% and David Smith of Blackwater C (83.33%) and Jason Bush of St Lawrence B (82.61%) also had good seasons. There was one adjudication and seven postponements in division 4.

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