**Kendal and District Table Tennis League**

**Minutes of Management Team Meeting – 19.30, 21 Feb 2024, at MT’s House**

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| ***Present –*** Peter Leahy (PL) (Chair), Mick Taylor (MT) (Sec), Seamus Hanna (SH), Norman Philbey (NP), Phil Swift (PS), Bob Gale (BG).***Apologies***  Chris Knowles (CK), Bryan Rhodes (BR), Jeff Pimblett (JP), Martin Wakelin (MW), Tony March (TM), John Wood (JW).1. ***Minutes of previous Management Team meeting (24 Aug 2023) and matters arising***
* The minutes have been distributed and were taken as read.
* Players/clubs in Cowan Bridge and Kirkby Stephen were not able to enter teams in the League.
* The possibility of a third division next season was discussed, to offer friendly competition for those players more interested in sociable fun play, perhaps two a side, once a month, all playing together at one venue. SH will consider further and canvas support.
* The way we charge League Fees (all fees per team, all fees per player or the status quo) will be discussed at the next AGM, subject to a formal proposal and seconding.
* Following extensive email correspondence in Sept 2023 between Management Team members, the wording for a possible new rule to prevent the use of “ringers” was agreed. This is included in Appendix A to these minutes. Subject to a formal proposal and seconding, this will be debated at the next AGM.
* MT sent out an email to all League captains in Sept 2023, explaining key rules.
* PL sent out a letter to all players in Sept 2023, concerning behaviour, service rule etc. He also ran a workshop on umpiring and the service rule.
* PL has nothing to report as yet on the possibility of running a One Star Tournament in Kendal.
* The equipment for NP/Milnthorpe junior coaching has been purchased as the previous minutes.
* All League players have been recommended by email to take the free TTE Safeguarding course.

 1. ***Officer Reports***
* ***Secretary (MT):*** Nothing.
* ***Treasurer (TM):*** TM was not present.
* ***Chairman (PL):*** PL has joined the TTE North West Local Organising Group. Others on the group are Dan O’Connell, Mike Sunderland, Paul Hutchings, Karen Tonge and Martin Ireland. They will act with TTE to promote, organise and share knowledge relating to table tennis (tournaments, coaching, etc) in the north west.
* PL reported that Saturday coaching at Natland by Dan, Beth and Peter continues to go well in 2023. A total of 44 people (including 12 females) having been coached.
* The Natland Club is growing such that there is now insufficient time and space available at Natland Village Hall. In response to this, PL is looking into the option of growing by using satellite venues in addition to Natland. One possibility he is exploring is a new club at Lower Holker Village Hall. Negotiations are at an early stage and there are practical problems to overcome, eg lighting, purchase of tables etc.
* ***Junior Coordinator (SH):*** See report in Appendix B.

. 1. ***Unplayed Matches***
* MW was not present. MT to contact MW and check what action is required.
1. ***Annual Tournament, 24 March 2024***
* Player Elligibility: Agreed to leave unchanged from last year, ie Tournament open to KDTTL players plus members of clubs affiliated to KDTTL. Affiliation is loose and unofficial, but all felt there was no need at present to formalise affiliation. Affiliated clubs include Kirkby Stephen and the Leisure Centre Club. PL suggested the Tournament be open to anyone playing in Cumbria, but after discussion this was rejected. The Junior Tournament is open to all juniors, as last year.
* There could be approx 30 juniors in the Junior Tournament. Because of time pressure, it was agreed juniors can enter only one age group, but can choose any group for which they are eligible, for example, a 10 year old can enter U11 or U13 or U16. Also those entering the Junior Tournament can enter the morning Senior Tournament events, but cannot enter the Senior Handicap Singles or the Seniors Doubles, as these start at the same time as the Junior events.
* Arrangements were made for provision of nets, balls, score boards, table numbers, setting up tables etc.
* MT to issue the entry form by email in the next day or two.
* Someone is needed full time on the desk to arrange and record matches on the day, ie a Tournament Referee. MT to ask TM if he is prepared to do this.
* It was agreed to move into line with TTE and international events and define Juniors as U19 (not U18) on 31 Dec 2023. Veterans shall be defined as 40 or over on 1 Jan 2024.
1. ***Finals Night, Wed 27 March 2024***
* Since Natland VH cannot provide a second room for knocking up, MT has booked Burton Memorial Hall (2 rooms) for 27 March 2024 and this date and venue was approved.
* MT will ask Burton TTC if they are willing to organise simple refreshments (eg tea, coffee, squash, crisps, biscuits, cakes etc).
* Trophies and certificates for the events played on the night will be presented immediately. However, League fixtures will not be complete, so League trophies and certificates will be presented at the KO Cup Final in May (see below).
1. ***KO Cup Final***
* Agreed to hold at Natland, w/c 6 May 2024, first choice Wednesday, second choice Tuesday. MT to book.
* It was agreed that it is good to circulate these events around the clubs, for example the Divisional Shield Finals at Crook was a success. MT to ask Grayrigg if they would like to host an event sometime.
1. ***AGM***
* The League Calendar shows 23 May 2024, but MT cannot make this date. Also, Ibis can no longer accommodate us as they have bookings every night of the week. MT will research alternative dates and venues and report back. A pub with upstairs room would be ideal, eg Strickland Arms.
1. ***Not Used***
2. ***AOB***
* None

The meeting closed at 22.00. ***Distribution*** All League members (by email). | ***Action******SH******PL******MT******MT******MT******MT******MT******MT******MT*** |

**Appendix A**

**Proposed additional KDTTL rule, to be debated at the next AGM (subject to proposer and seconder).**

Players are eligible to play in the K&DTTL if they are members of Table Tennis England and are registered to play within 4 weeks of the start of the season. The integrity of the League and the spirit of fair competition is always paramount. Therefore, visiting players cannot, for example, be registered for only one or two games or very short periods of time or for particular matches critical to promotion or relegation issues. Each case will be taken on its merits. Therefore, any club wishing to register a player after the 4 weeks has elapsed must submit a formal email application/justification to the Match/Membership Secretary who will make the initial decision. If the club concerned is not happy with that decision, an appeal can be lodged within 7 days of that decision. The Match/Membership Secretary will then circulate the application to the members of the Management Committee who will make the final decision. Approval of such an application will require an absolute majority of those eligible to vote. This means that with 13 members currently eligible to vote, at least 7 must vote in favour. If the application is successful, the individual registration fee payable for the new player will be pro rata to the number of matches still remaining in the season for the team for which the new player is registered but subject to a minimum of 30% of the fee for the season.

**Appendix B.**

**KDTTL Juniors Report for the Period September 2023 – February 2024**

The junior section of the league is currently thriving with active coaching sessions held at Burton-in-Kendal, Dallam Sports Club, Natland and St Luke’s, Slyne with Hest. In addition, a number of juniors have attended the higher level coaching sessions delivered by Dan and Beth O’Connell and Peter Leahy on Saturdays at Natland. Both aspects of this coaching has resulted in a significant and clearly visible improvement in playing standards amongst our juniors. It is also allowing players to not only compete in the Junior League South, but six juniors (four Natland, two St Luke’s) have progressed to playing in the adult KDTTL Division 2 and Lancaster and Morecambe Championship 2 leagues. The four from Natland are averaging a 31-39% win rate and with three Player of the Match awards and the two from St Luke’s are averaging 40% and 14% win rates respectively, which is very respectable and encouraging in their first season playing in adult leagues.

It is also encouraging how the KDTTL adult league players have been so welcoming to the juniors and offered constructive advice after matches – the juniors are the future of the league, but it is still great for them to be playing in a positive and friendly league environment.

Progression of our juniors would not be possible without the dedication and hard work of Peter Leahy, Norman Philbey, Martin Wakelin, Paul Hines, Tony March and myself. We do this through a love of our sport, but it is all the more rewarding when we experience the positive attitude and commitment, skill, application and excellent behaviour displayed by the juniors - testimony to them, their parents/carers and the approach and ethos of the clubs and league in setting and maintaining high standards of sportsmanship.

**1. Junior League South**

***1.1 Winter League***

The winter league (3rd league season – two winter, one spring) ran from September – December 2023, comprising 26 players aged 8-16 from Dallam, Natland and St Luke’s, Slyne with Hest.

**Division 1:** Comprising seven two-player teams (playing partners are selected by the juniors themselves and two substitute players stepped in this time when required) playing each other twice, thus home and away. Natland fielded four of the teams and St Luke’s the remaining three and none from Dallam as their players were within the younger age group playing in Division 2.

After a closely fought contest, which was finally determined in the last doubles match, Liam and Euan from Natland emerged victorious by three points (104-103) over Max and Isaac from St Luke’s, who were the previous winners of the winter and spring leagues. There were notable individual and collective performances from other teams and individuals, with many close matches across the league season, which remained competitive and of interest throughout.

**Division 2:** Comprising four teams - of which five of the juniors were playing in a league for the very first time. Chim, Niall and Will from Dallam were victorious by four points (48-44) over Ronja & Abi from Natland. Again, the title being was decided in the very last fixture, demonstrating an even and competitive league. All of the others playing for the first time did immensely well. It is not easy stepping up to play in league matches and especially at such a young age and for most of them only after a relatively short period of coaching.

In both divisions, the spirit in which the matches were played was very impressive. The juniors all played to win, but accepted any lost games and matches with good grace, shook hands and moved on to the next match. They are a great example of playing in the true spirit of the game.

This Junior League South allows the three clubs to compete against one another and contributes directly to the noticeable improvement in the standard of play. It has also helped the juniors to develop social skills by mixing with other juniors in new surroundings and forging acquaintances and friendships.

We are most grateful to Paul Hines, Margaret Wardle and Neil Davies for their assistance at Junior League fixtures at St Luke’s and Natland respectively and to parents/carers who help umpire doubles matches and with scoring, etc.

***1.2 Spring League***

**Division 1:** This started yesterday 20 February 2024 with the first fixture at St Luke’s with nine (two person) teams, four from St Luke’s and five from Natland. Due to competing outdoor summer sports, the league will only have five fixtures at St Luke’s and Natland and runs until 16 April 2024 with the teams playing each other only once.

Winners and runners-up medals for the winter league were presented at the start of the fixture by Tony March. He also praised those involved in the organisation of the league and thanked parents for their continued support and the players for their match performances and impeccable behaviour in the winter league.

The standard of play displayed yesterday continues to be very high and has set a real competitive benchmark for the season, with a tightly fought encounter again anticipated. A number of juniors have voluntarily stepped up from Division 2 this time and whilst they may lose matches, it is important for them to play in a more competitive environment in terms of their development. However, we are mindful of ensuring they do not become disillusioned by losing frequently and to emphasise positives in their performances.

**Division 2:** This will start on 5 March and as there are only three teams (one each from Burton, Dallam and St Luke’s) round-robin fixtures will be played at each of the three venues on 5, 19 and 28 March 2024. All of the players involved are very much beginners and at a vey similar level and it will be interesting to see how they perform and progress.

**4. Juniors at Other Competitions**

**Cumbria Schools Table Tennis Association (CSTTA):** A number of our juniors entered and were successful in this year’s annual competition both in the school teams and as individuals and congratulations to winners at U11, U13, U16 and U19 who now progress to the National Finals in Wolverhampton.

**National Cadet League:** Peter Leahy was instrumental in organising and entering a Natland team composed of Euan, George, Liam and Thomas (St Lukes and Natland member) rotating as a team of three players this year. This is an excellent opportunity for our most promising juniors to advance to play against some of the best players in the North West (inc North Wales) and understandably this has been a journey of discovery and adapting to new and higher playing levels and different competing environments.

Currently, the team has played 12 matches, won 2, drawn 2 and lost 8 and sit 4th out of five teams, but are competing against some of the longest established and best clubs in the region, so this is no mean feat. Three of our players are averaging between 36% and 45% win rate and George and Liam both have one Player of the Match award. With this exposure, the team can only get better and this is reflected in their much improved play at the K&DTTL Juniors South League level.

It is important for KDTTL to offer as many pathways as possible to our juniors, whether that be social, local club or National Cadet League level and to continue to strive to encourage them to thrive to their best level possible.

**Other Developments**

***Kirkby Stephen TT Club*** – Mike Sunderland has revived the numbers of juniors attending their club with an influx in September 2023 of 12 juniors aged 6-17 years old and so things are again thriving there. Mike organised a juniors coaching session and tournament on 28 December 2023 which I assisted with on the day with 12 attendees enjoying both aspects in a very successful and rewarding day.

Some of his new cohort of juniors also competed and were successful in the CSTTA individuals competition at Kirby Stephen in January. Mike is also hopeful that 10 of his juniors will enter the KDTTL Annual Juniors Tournament on 24 March 2024.

**Challenges**

1.It is a recurring theme that promising juniors suddenly drop out of the coaching/playing table tennis And whilst it may be enough that they are inspired and introduced to the key basics of the game and get fun and pleasure from the sessions, this highlights two challenges. Firstly, promoting table tennis effectively to get youngsters to play and secondly retaining them whilst competing against an understandable wide array of other interests and activities.

At Natland, we created a flyer and introductory letter which was emailed to 11 primary schools in Kendal and the surrounding Natland & Oxenholme area regarding our coaching and club offer. No schools replied (understandable perhaps due to their heavy work load) and only one parent with two children has responded. Presumably, the other clubs have similar experiences and we would benefit from discussing this and how we might improve recruitment. As this season is now nearing an end and if it is considered worthwhile, I will look at and as required, produce refreshed league promotional material on the different clubs offer for the 365 website, social media, etc for use in September 2024 before the start of the new season.

2.Identifying and helping our most talented juniors to further develop their game and providing opportunities for them to compete at the highest level possible is something we need to actively consider.

3.If we are to help juniors develop it is important to increase the availability of coaching perhaps geared at different levels of ability and to do this requires more Level 1 and Level 2 coaches within the league (Peter Leahy has emailed regarding the next TTE courses) and previously organised a successful day at Natland for coaches. Clubs would also perhaps benefit from an exchange between coaches at their respective coaching sessions and/or sharing training materials.

Seamus Hanna

KDTTL Juniors Coordinator

21 February 2024