

CUMBRIA SQUASH ACTION PLAN

2011/2012 SEASON

END OF SEASON REPORT

This report is an update and follow-up on the half season report I issued as an appendix to the minutes of the 25 January 2012 Executive Committee meeting

1 COACHING

1.1 ESR Squash Coach Development Workshop

The plan was to continue our policy of holding such a workshop each season

Holding the type of workshop we have had in recent seasons is no longer ESR policy but thanks to Angela Cwaczko, ESR manager NW Region, who supported our request, approval was given to hold one for us in Cumbria.

The workshop was held at Carlisle Club on 3 March 2012 – with Chris Lengthorn as tutor. We were advised that the minimum delegate requirement was 8. Unfortunately we did not achieve this but Chris agreed to go ahead with the workshop with 6 delegates. The workshop was a success and was enjoyed by all.

ESR set a charge of £10 per delegate - £60 has been paid to ESR

This was allowed by Angela as a special favour for us – I would like to think we could hold another next season but the very poor support we had for it may put the dampers on that.

1.2 Squash Coach Qualification Courses

The plan was to try to hold Level 1 & Level 2 courses in the county – at the request of CSR members

Thanks to Angela and Jayden Hocking, ESR Coaching and Performance Administrator, this was accepted and both courses were approved to be held at Windscale Squash Club.

Level 1 Course

This was held successfully – Day 1 on 14 April 2012 and Day 2 on 26 May 2012.

The financial support for the course promised by ESR/Bolton University was provided and most delegates were given the course free of charge. Under normal circumstances a charge of £230 would have applied. Our thanks for this.

The Tutor was Sue Woodhouse a top ESR coach

There were 12 coaches on the course – 3 have successfully completed the course and all pre requisites - the others still have to provide some information before their certificates are issued.

Level 2 Course

All arrangements for this to be held at Windscale Club were finally made after many changes were made to accommodate the requirements of ESR and potential delegates. The two weekends were to be 7/8 July 2012 & 1/2/September 2012.

The course fee was £340 per delegate.

The tutor was to be Sue Woodhouse

Unfortunately with only 4 applicants we did not make the minimum 8 delegate requirement for the course to be run and had to cancel it.

I feel that this is a missed opportunity for our Level 1 Coaches to be able to attend a level 2 Course on their own doorstep – my thanks to those who did apply.

I have discussed the situation with Jayden and he has not abandoned Cumbria and is already looking at the possibility of trying again to hold a Level 2 Course in the county next season - most likely at Carlisle Club

My thanks to Jayden, Sue, Windscale Club and club representative Mark Winder for the good work they did with me on these courses

1.3 Coaching for Elite Junior County squads

Our plan was to continue the regular sessions we have been holding for some years now – for boys & girls U11, U13, U15, U17, U19 - a target of 5 was set for the season.

County coaches, Paul bell & Linda Winder, organised and ran these sessions and achieved four in the season – which is good

We have a major concern about the attendance to the sessions because only a total of 49 juniors attended during the season when we expected about 40 attending per session. The Executive Committee and Junior Committees are investigating this.

1.4 Junior Development Squad Coaching

The plan was to continue these regular coaching sessions for boys and girls `grass roots` junior players that were successfully started by Chris Lenthorn in 2010/2011 season. A target of 5 sessions was set for the season

At the time of the half season report only one had been carried out because Paul Bell the coach had a slow start because he had to develop his own contact information data base for the juniors – there was no hand over from the previous year.

His intention was to start a rolling programme in the second half of the season but has not been able to do this for various communication reasons - including administrative difficulties is getting the information on the coaching sessions to the grass roots juniors that these courses are aimed at. He has direct contact information for the elite squad players but needs help from clubs to get it for the grass roots players and also for the clubs to encourage attendance.

Maintaining this initiative is very important to the County from a junior development point of view – we have seen general improvement in performances since they were introduced. Also, Paul's services are free – paid for by Angela – so we should take full advantage of this and make sure we get the sessions moving next season. Angela has already confirmed to me that she will continue to give the financial support if we do so.

One initiative by Paul & Chris Lilley to give grass roots coaching to Juniors in the Penrith area during the summer period is being organised. This was not on our Action Plan but fully supports this initiative – I will be giving more details at the AGM

1.5 Development of a Formal Coaching Establishment

This is a long term project that we started this season- to develop a formal Coaching Establishment that will support all active coaching and coach development requirements for Clubs and County. We have tried to do this many times over the many years I have been involved in CSR and several times we have had some success but have never been able to get a sound structure that we have been able to maintain This is another attempt.

We have started to move forward on this - Paul, Ronnie & myself had a meeting with Aileen Grant, Development Officer, Active Cumbria Children`s Services, Cumbria County Council and Richard Metcalf, Development Officer(Coaching) in the same organisation to discuss our general development plans to see if they could help and support us in any way – the answer was yes..

Richard was interested in our plans for coach development and the implementation of a formal coaching establishment and said he would work with us on it. Since the meeting I have provided him with a flow chart my ideas for such an establishment (that I prepared in 1984) for him to review relative to our current coaching structure and initiatives and how it needs modifying to make it a template for the new establishment.

Paul has met with Richard on two occasions to progress the work. The initiatives we have to qualify coaches and develop existing coaches do of course link into this project. We have also discussed the need to carry out a coach survey across the county to determine the numbers of qualified coaches we have and what they are doing at their clubs – not started yet

Some good progress but a lot of work still to do - encouraging

2. MARKING & REFEREEING

This seasons target was to follow our M&R strategy started in 2009/2010 by continuing the process of holding a Referee Workshop each season to introduce as many people as possible to the rules of squash and their application.

Ronnie Bell organised a workshop over a weekend in the first half of the season (20 Nov 2011) at Penrith Rugby Club but had to cancel it due to lack of support – he thinks that holding it over a weekend especially near Christmas was the reason for this. He decided to try again, still at Penrith, on 11 January 2012, and this was successful.

Target was achieved.

This initiative was financed by ESR

3. INTRODUCTION OF RACKETBALL

This is a new initiative financed by ESR and our AP target for the season was for Paul to hold Racketball Road Shows at 6 clubs and then to follow up at those clubs by giving several hours coaching. Whilst doing this he would qualify any interested club members as Racketball Leaders who then would coach their club colleagues. Clubs were requested to contact him if they were interested but there has been very little response.

At the half season point Paul had progressed this at his own club (Carlisle) and at Penrith, and had done some work at Kendal but outside of this initiative – so, at that point we are disappointed and hoped that the situation would change in the second half of the season and more clubs would take up the offer – unfortunately that did not happen so we obviously need a rethink on this. This is very disappointing particularly as it is a free service – Pauls fees are being paid for by Angela.

Obviously the second part of the plan – to hold a County Closed Racketball Championship – did not happen and will be pushed over into next season if we decide to try again and get the support we require

This is a very disappointing situation because we consider the introduction of Racketball as a major way of increasing adult participation in clubs and in CSR activities.

Very little progress on this - target not achieved

4. CUMBRIA JUNIOR SQUASH

This season`s targets were:

- **To ensure we maintain effective operation of the Junior Organisation throughout the season**

achieved.

- **To meet all of our junior inter county team commitments**

This season we entered 8 teams – boys & girls at U13, 15, 17, 19 age groups – and with one exception where we could not get sufficient players to field one of the girls` teams for Stage 2 weekend we met all other commitments. Good effort.

- **To continue to develop the group and improve the efficiency of its operations.**

David has started to re-organise responsibilities within the Junior Committee to allow it to operate even more effectively in future seasons – further changes are in the pipeline. He has also completed the work on the development of a `professional ` process for coaching and mentoring top juniors in the County Squads and the Inter County Teams – in liaison with County Coaches Paul Bell and Linda Winder.

Good progress has been made on this initiative but more work is required

- **To widen the scope of the activities of the Junior Group.**

This was achieved with the re-introduction of an Inter Club Team Competition in the second half of the season

- **To increase the number of clubs in the county with Junior sections.**

A new Junior Section at Kendal Club was mentioned at the AGM but no work has been done by the Junior Committee to follow-up on this

Objective not achieved.

Good progress has been made by the Junior Committee – but there still some important work to do.

5. DIRECT SUPPORT TO CLUBS

The plan was for Paul to work with Penrith & Appleby clubs to help them develop – to meet a request for help they made 2-3 seasons ago. ESR has given his services for 12 Days – free of charge – to do the work.

In the first half of the season he contacted club representatives to advise how he can help and realistically then the ball was in their courts to get things going.

No contact has been made from the clubs in the second half of the season to follow up on this and get things moving so we need a re-think on the initiative.

6. INTER COUNTY TEAMS – Senior & Adult Age Group

Our plan was to enter Men`s Senior, Over 45 & Over 55 and Women`s Senior County Teams in ESR Inter County Competition and meet all Stage 1 & Stage 2 commitments.

We met Stage 1 & 2 requirements for the Over 45 & Over 55 – target achieved.

We met Stage 1 requirements for the Men`s & Women`s Senior Teams but for reasons out of our control Stage 2 events were cancelled by ESR because unfortunately some of the other teams in the competitions could not field teams for them. We had our teams ready for Stage 2 so we can say we also achieved this objective.

Entering Men`s & Women`s Senior Teams for first time for many years in the main Inter County events is particularly important to us – so Paul & Linda Winder gave special training to potential players to prepare them for

and get their right mind set for the rigours of the competition. Our aim must be to continue with these teams in future seasons

COUNTY LEAGUE

The plan was to consolidate on the success we had last season in developing the league operation and making it more efficient and to ensure it is maintained – this has been achieved.

Also, to continue the effective operation of Resultszone using the good work that was done last season as a springboard for this – that was achieved.

Also, to continue development work – specific initiatives were:

- Complete the review of League Rules to make them more appropriate to current League operation – this has been done and the revised rules have been issued.
- Increase support for the Leagues – we did not achieve this. Prior the last season`s leagues starting we had some general thoughts on the matter but no new ideas came out of them. We held 2010/2011 level of team entries so there was no further deterioration but indications are that we can expect a drop in the women`s teams next season – we may not be able to form a league - so we need to do something. To see if there is anything more we can do to make the League more attractive and improve support by clubs, we planned during this season to re-visit the feedback from the surveys we carried out with clubs a few seasons ago to see if there is anything we had missed – I had previously reviewed all of the feedback and summarised the points made, ready for examination by the committee. The review was not carried out but it will be done before the new season starts.

It is important we come up with something and one idea that Chris has is to consider one of the items on the list which is to introduce a women`s team competition based upon the Inter County Championship format where teams play off over two weekend stages.

8. COUNTY CLOSED CHAMPIONSHIPS

The plan was to ensure that we at least maintain the support for our major championships and to try to increase support for them.

- Junior County Closed – U11, U13, u15, U17, U19 - very successfully held in September 2011 with the usual high entries.
- Men`s Senior County Closed – vey successfully held in January 2012. This is a graded competition and we were successful in improving player support for it by increasing the number of grading categories which resulted in about a 40% increase in entries. We are very pleased about this
- Women`s Senior County Closed – successfully held alongside the men`s event but with the normal low entries. We were unsuccessful in encouraging more player support for it. This is a future development area

The plan also covered another opportunity for us to:

- Re-establish the Men`s Over 35 Championship – this has not been held for two seasons and we saw this as another opportunity to try to do it. We organised it in December but had to cancel it for lack of support – so failure with this objective.
- Consolidate on last season`s success (albeit with small entries) in re-establishing the Men`s Over 45 & Over 55 Championships. This was successful - the events were organised in parallel at Carlisle Club on 25 & 26 February 2012. We also decided to run an Over 50 championship at the same time to split the two to reduce the age difference effect which can discourage players i.e. it creates an additional grading level - very similar

to what we set up for the men's Senior event. This was also successful and was a move forward from last season when we tried to hold it but did not get sufficient support for it. This combination gave more entries overall compared to last season

Great progress in this initiative

9. FINANCIAL

Our plan for finance was to carry out a comprehensive review of the way we manage our income & expenditure.

We started this exercise at the first Executive Committee meeting of the season on 8 November 2011 - full details are recorded in the minutes of the meeting. We agreed changes to be made during the season and other changes that will be introduced next season.

This review is not a one-off it will be an ongoing process in future seasons. We will be continuing the work at the Budget Preparation meeting at the first meeting of 2012/2013 Executive Committee – where we will see what effect the changes we have made have had, decide if we still want to go ahead with the changes we planned for next season and decide what else we need to do.

The Treasurer's report at the AGM will give details of the results of our efforts

10. MARKETING, PUBLICITY & COMMUNICATIONS

We now have a dedicated MPC Officer – Guy – and our objective is to develop the function to provide an effective service for CSR. This is effectively an open ended remit for Guy to develop the function in a way he sees to be to the best advantage and interest of the organisation. He has started his work which includes:

- Managing the organisation name change to Cumbria Squash & Racketball, including designing a new logo with a local school – this is almost complete – the new logo will be presented at the AGM
- Developing marketing processes that allow us to sell ourselves to potential sponsors in a professional way - no progress on this yet
- Working with current sponsors and looking for new sponsors and ensuring we meet their requirements in a way that encourages them to stay with us – Guy is currently working with current sponsor Roger Smith, Managing Director of Thomas Graham & Sons Ltd on a new initiative – a full report will be given at the AGM

Other things to do are:

- Reviewing and developing the website in close liaison with Bridget
- Developing our e-mail communication systems
- Setting up processes to ensure we get effective and wide ranging newspaper and other reporting media coverage – including ESR NW Region Newsletter
- Liaison with ESR and other National and local sporting organisations, local government organisations etc, to take advantage of any financial, development and technical support opportunities
- Support CJS in its development of a newsletter

Guy is making good progress and we have done well. This is good but we still have a long way to go and we can't expect to cover everything in one season – all we require is to see progressive development season to season

To support this initiative Tom, Ronnie & Paul met last week with Aileen Grant, Development Officer/Active Cumbria – the County Sports Partnership for Cumbria - and Richard Metcalf her colleague who is involved in coaching support in the organisation. Aileen asked for the meeting after a discussion with Angela to see if there was anything her organisation could do to support the development of our sport in the county. Angela had advised her that we are an effective organisation within ESR and as far as she is aware the only one with a comprehensive development plan and she should have look at it. I gave her a copy and she found it interesting enough to meet with us. The meeting I mentioned earlier in the Coaching Establishment initiative was good with many avenues of support identified.

To be followed up.

11. ENGLAND SQUASH & RACKETBALL

Our plan requires that we continue to maintain a good working relationship with the NW Regional Manager – Angela – and support her development initiatives.

Tom has regular communication with Angela and already has a good working relationship with her. We have supported her (ESR) development initiatives this season – many of which are addressed by our AP. Unfortunately we could not make much progress in developing Racketball in Cumbria. Development of this sport across the Country is a major ESR development initiative so I am disappointed in the situation

There are two sides to every coin however and as well as supporting Angela`s work, we are lucky to be working with her because of the excellent support she gives us e.g. We would not have had the Coaches Workshop and the Levels 1 & 2 Coaching Courses in the county without her support - and Paul`s fees for the Racketball, Development Squad and Direct Support for Clubs initiatives are paid by her.

Angela has great respect for the way we operate as an organisation and the way Cumbria players, parents and support people conduct themselves at ESR Regional competitions and other activities – this is excellent and boosts our image in the ESR organisation

This has been a great success

Tom Armstrong

11 August 2012