

Northern Aces Annual Report 2020-2021

Firstly I'd like to thank everyone for your time and support to NA over the most challenging of years, I hope that everyone has managed to stay well, and thoughts are with anyone who has been affected in any way by the effects of the pandemic.

We as a committee really appreciate your loyalty to our merry band and have really missed seeing your smiling, laughing and concentrating faces at the weekly sessions.

As Paul mentioned at the last AGM until the pandemic struck we had felt the trajectory of Northern Aces was really on the up and as a club we really ought to reflect on the 2019/20 season once again as we have a huge amount to be proud of, such as hosting our award winning 11th International GLTA and 2 sets of North West league team champions. Weekend Session attendance in February & March were at the highest that they had been in a number of years and we were ready for the summer (that never was!)

As the last 6 months since our last online AGM have shown, things are certainly less than fully predictable, but we are now at least entering a stage where we will be able to begin to start to play together again, albeit following the LTA social distancing guidelines, and of course, only playing outdoors, for the foreseeable future. ,

Post Covid Play :

When we launch the new indoor and social sessions on we will initially have to continue with the system that we implemented during the brief window of play in 2020.

Unfortunately for a period of time this does mean that, we have had to move away from the easy NA ethos of just turn up and play socially as and when you feel.

For the new social sessions there will be ticketed access much like an event or gig, which can be booked on our website for each session.

All members will need to sign up and register to then book themselves onto a weekly session or any other event that they wish to participate in , such as internal tournaments, or any social activities indoors or outdoors, so be sure to keep an eye on the calendar and social media for information of when bookings are open. We do appreciate this is quite a

change for many long standing members but is a current necessity in venues, to comply with track and trace and social distancing guidelines, and the guidelines of the venues themselves.

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Membership :

We are grateful that 28 members retained their memberships over the 2020/21 year, despite the lack of opportunities to play our club at any normal capacity. Last year with the postponement of tennis season the Committee agreed fees should be updated to suit the length of financial year till April 2021 with a minimum £20 membership charge to maintain the financial legitimacy of Northern Aces. This was really important to offset the financial investment in the website and online payment facilities and to continue with insurances, memberships and affiliations. The "Covid" membership fee of £20 for the year helped us to stay on top of the annual fixed costs , and was also a really great show of support - so a heartfelt thank you!!

Membership numbers stood at 65 at the end of the 2019/20 season and we are hoping that by opening up membership, and starting to play again in April/May we will be able to get back to that sort of strength in numbers very soon and to reignite the upward trend (2017: 46 members, 2019 :55 members) although as noted at the previous AGM, we have seen a decline in the numbers of Women who have or are joining the club, so that is something that we will take a look at improving over the coming year.

Pre pandemic the committee had agreed to increase the annual membership fee from £30 to £35. Principally to offset the rising costs of court hire and to enable us some small cushioning when booking additional courts in view of rising attendances.

To maintain the positivity of social sessions with attendance numbers steadily increasing to mid twenties pre lockdown, we want to ensure court numbers continue to reflect attendance,we have now secured bookings at Sports city and the membership fee for the 2021 year will be £35.

Memberships for 2021 will become payable on 1st May and all members are invited to sign up again on the website, or by returning the form and bank payment details that are attached.

Sessions :

Pretty much the raison d'etre of Northern Aces is the weekly social sessions whereby members and guests meet up get to know each other in safe, fun and social tennis space.

This coming year will be a little more challenging in terms of what we will be permitted to do on a social level, at least for the time being, but the committee have undertaken risk assessment (as requested by any prospective host clubs/facilities) and are going to be following the LTA guidance with regards to " covid safe "play, until a return to our usual format is allowed.

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With this in mind initially our social sessions will most likely run outdoors Urmston and or Fallowfield for one weekend a month in addition to the indoor courts at Sports city- Please bare with us as this is proving to be slightly more long winded than we had hoped, as getting hold of people at Sports city is proving quite the challenge!

As during the previous restrictions , now that we are going to be permitted to play indoors, members will be required to book onto the sessions that they wish to attend via the website. We will let you know as soon as we are able to offer the more flexible option of just turning up to play as and when you feel like it and will be driven by LTA and gvt guidelines.

Acknowledging that we have a wide variety of ability within the club is important, especially for social play and it is part of what makes the club so inclusive and enjoyable to be a part of. We will of course be continuing with the ethos of mutual respect for each and every member despite of their background, ability and perceived tennis skill as that is what makes our club so welcoming and special to our members.

With this in mind, we are to receive an LTA safeguarding and wellbeing inspection during the coming year so we ask all to do their common duty and be courteous and respectful of all members Should anyone have any concerns they can contact me in total confidence(as with my other hat on I'm also safeguarding officer for the club)

It is pertinent to remind everyone that whatever your ability and whether you play team tennis or social tennis, we as a club do not accept behaviour that may be construed as bullying or discrimination on any level, so lets play nice everyone, and make sure that we are mindful about what we say and who we are saying it too - even if you believe it is in jest. Keeping Northern Aces a friendly and welcoming safe space is what we are about so lets be gentle and kind when we get back together again and kerb the quips or comments that may make anyone feel uncomfortable or unwelcome to participates in any of the club activities.

Facilities available for us to play

Sports city; as you are probably aware, has been turned into a large scale SC are now operated by GLL, they have had some issues with support over the year, given that all staff until recently have been furloughed.We have had a meeting with them and are happy to be holding the first social sessions indoors n Saturday 22nd May 2021.

Urmston; With the Mens teams starting their 2021 league campaigns, we are pleased that Urmston have again extended the offer to us to utilise their courts for league tennis (as a home match venue) as well as the option for Sunday social sessions. They are however asking that this year we pay upfront and in advance for court usage. As this potentially will be one of our regular opportunities to play, we really do need members to sign up and let us know that they will be attending, so that any courts booked do not go empty. We appreciate that weather is a

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concern, but the courts there are pretty good and offer all weather play, we are in Manchester, so are used to a drop of rain occasionally, right?

Other opportunities

We are currently discussing regular outdoor bookings with other clubs (such as Fallowfield) and are looking at options for Saturday and even weekday evening social sessions to enable us to get hitting together again. We will keep you posted and ask what you want us to do, and what works best for you in some surveys over the coming year.

GLTA :

September 2020 was unfortunately a no go due to the restrictions in place. However we have tentatively booked wit the Northern for Kiss My Ace 2021 which will run the first weekend in September.

We are happy to say that we are now opening registration for Kiss My Ace 2021 and anticipate that we should be able to fill the tournament with British and Irish participants and any overseas participants who are able to travel, but this is of course all subject to the unfolding situation.

VOLUNTEERS TO HELP US RUN THE EVENT ARE VERY WELCOME!

Internal Tournaments and Events:

Ladders/ box leagues (Singles/Doubles) - These will be up and running again soon, with a doubles ladder on the cards to increase opportunities for folks to get together and to play. Huge thanks to Pat for his continued progress having refreshed and reinvigorated the box leagues a couple of years ago. These ladders and leagues provide a great way to improve our match play skills and get to know each other outside of the socials which as always is one of the joys of the club..

If you are keen to play in either or both box leagues/ladders please email info@northernacestennis and use LADDER in the subject

Rotator Tournaments - We will be looking to get the rotators back up and running later this year, so keep an eye on your emails and social media - as Defending champion ,Stuart Longworth must be getting tired of looking at that trophy by now! Massive thanks to Sofia and Gurj for their continued efforts with this very popular tournament format.

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Future Tournament opportunities: We are always keen to host more time limited events and tournaments, especially as the software that we use for the GLTA tournaments can be utilised to help run them, so if you have an idea or fancy pitching an idea for a fun inclusive tournament or tennis related event, please feel free to do so, as we are aware there are so many talented individuals out there who are happy to pull on the tournament director hat!

League Tennis

Huge appreciation to long serving (note I didn't say suffering!) captains Stuart Longworth and Michael Crook who will be taking teams forwards once again competing in the South Manchester leagues in the Div1 and 2 . A great way for Northern Aces to be seen in the wider tennis community in the NW.

The committee decided to postpone the entry of a third team into the league this year until we are back to a full membership roster and can offer a fulfilling opportunity for those members playing in the low B / C / D and of course any new members who would like to gain experience in league tennis at slightly (and it is only slightly!) more relaxed level.

The women's team will be fielded in the Manchester and District league again this year, having won DIV1 when it was last completed in 2019. This league is not proposing any relegation this year, so it will be a great chance to field a real mixture of abilities in the team. Matches start mid May and there are only 6 matches in this league this season.

Coaching / Rusty Rackets / Beginners Hour :

We will be looking at ways of reintroducing the coaching opportunities and also taking a gentle approach to the more rusty racquets amongst us at upcoming social sessions.

A Big thanks to Rob Keeling for instigating the '**Rusty Raquets**' programme which proved really popular with those coming back into playing after some time out.

Pride Parade :

As yet the Manchester Pride Parade is still not 100% confirmed. We will let you know if there is any update, as taking part in the parade is one of the highlights of the Pride season, and a great way to show off our club to the city.

Social :

Well, there's not been much opportunity for social events this year - but on the cards, fingers crossed and with a fair wind and good fortune, will be Celebratory dinners, awards and competitions. If you have any none tennis socials that you'd like to ask members to get involved with, please feel free to drop us a line!

We welcome all to organise events using the facebook page, so please don't be afraid to take

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