



QUARTERLY BULLETIN

ISSUE 5

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Top stories in this bulletin



Guardians of the Trophy!



Captain Fantastic



Iron Man



Hello everybody and welcome to the third Herts Bulletin of 2023.

I was going to call this the summer edition but is it just me or has it been a strange one? My memory may not be great but I'm sure we had a lovely beginning and it has certainly been a pretty nice end but what a lousy middle! Whatever the weather, I hope you enjoyed the tennis you played or watched and also managed to fit in some sort of a break along the way.

Just like the weather, everybody involved in Herts Tennis has been on a bit of an emotional rollercoaster recently. As the Summer County Cup drew to a close at Devonshire Park in July and unbelievably our Ladies had triumphed once again, the one and only Jeff Wayne was calling time on 35 years of truly wonderful service as our Men's captain. To put Jeff's tenure into some sort of perspective, when he took on the role Kylie was telling us how lucky she was before walking up the 'Neighbours' aisle with Jason Donovan (a nice thought), Maggie Thatcher was being wooed by Ronald Reagan (not a nice thought) and Wimbledon were beating Liverpool in the FA Cup final (for fear of upsetting any Herts Reds I think I'll blank my thoughts on that one).

Then we were rocked by tragic news from one of our biggest friends and supporters at Herts Tennis. Rickmansworth's Mark O'Brien announced that he'd been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. Was he going to take it lying down? Let's just say that a few short months later he was attempting a World Record swim for a person living with the condition!

In this edition, you'll discover how these two extraordinary people got on in their most recent exploits, we'll preview this year's Harris Cup Finals day, plus there are features on a local lad who has been taking the Visually Impaired game by storm, a long running and incredibly successful charity event and more. Oh and we'll be asking for your help with the LTA Awards scheme. Yes, it's that time of year again!

I can't leave you without reminding the dedicated few who like nothing better than a night out at an AGM (well, I did say 'few') that the governance changes agreed at June's EGM mean our own AGM won't take place until March 2024. Oh and without asking what you'd like to hear about in future bulletins of course. You can drop us a line on that at hertstennis@gmail.com, or why not make it even easier for us by sending in a contribution.

Last but not least, please help us by sharing the Bulletin with the volunteers at your venue. This is their communication.

Right, onwards...in a helter-skeltery sort of way!

Lee Evans

Dates for your diary

- LTA Awards – Nomination period now open until 30th November.
- Safeguarding Awareness week, 2nd to 6th October.
- Harris Cup Finals Day at Townsend LTC, from 10am on 8th October.
- LTA registration – just a reminder that venue registration opens on the 16th October. Club main contacts should have received a communication directly from the LTA plus it has been communicated in LTA venue newsletters. Further information is available here: [LTA Tennis Venue Registration Details](#) and if you want to check out what is required ahead of renewing your registration you can find this support on the FAQs in the venue and volunteer support section of the customer support pages here: [Requirements \(lta.org.uk\)](#).
- Coaches forum – there are still a few spaces on this year's LTA coaches forum running in Herts on 27th October 2023 9.30-13.30 at Batchwood and worth 4 licence points. If you can't make that one there is also a combined Middlesex / Herts one on 2nd November at David Lloyd Heston. This year the focus is on coaching great doubles and developing yourself and your business. Book via the LTA coaches portal or directly with UCoach here: [Workshops – UCoach](#)
- Support our Men's and Ladies County teams in the National Winter County Cup at Edgbaston (Men) and Bromley (Ladies), 24th to 26th November.
- Venue Forum at Welwyn LTC, 7pm on Tuesday 5th December.
- Herts Tennis AGM – March 2024, date to be confirmed.

Tennis Volunteer Community:

- 'Walking Tennis' Virtual Coffee Session, 10th October, 2pm and 7pm
- Padel Q&A, 7th November, 2pm and 7pm.
- 'Got a challenge at your club' Virtual Coffee Session, 14th November, 2pm and 7pm.
- Q&A with the LTA President, Sandi Proctor, 28th November, 2pm.

For more information on all of the Tennis Volunteer Community events and to register, please go to <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/TennisSupportGroup> or contact Simon Spalter at tennis@eceltd.co.uk

It's 'au revoir' Jeff as our Ladies do it again!



Our Ladies get their hands on the County Cup trophy again

What a wonderful week it was in Eastbourne in late July and what a very special time for Herts Tennis. Weather delays caused a change to the format and resulted in some crazy hopping between venues, but that couldn't stop our Ladies from being crowned National County Cup champions for an unbelievable 4th year in a row!

Ladies Captain Amanda Elliott led from the front as the team won all 5 of its matches to seemingly win the title with ease and in what was Jeff Wayne's swansong as Captain, the Men very nearly completed the double, finishing as runners-up and only missing out on the top spot by 3 rubbers.

Jeff has always said that it's all about the players and of course he's right. Without our fantastic group, the incredible success that both our Ladies and our Men have enjoyed in recent years would not have been possible. Yet, the emotional guard of honour that players from all of the teams playing at Eastbourne awarded to Jeff in the presentation ceremony at the end of the week spoke volumes. We have been so lucky to have such a special person leading our county. Like his much celebrated Martians, his contribution over 35 years has simply been Out of this World. Thank you, Jeff!

Who is going to lead us into a new era, you ask. We are delighted to announce that Hamid Hejazi has accepted the invitation to captain our Men's team.

A lot of you will know Hamid, who comes with much experience in the Herts Tennis family, having played for both our Junior and Senior teams and most recently having captained our Over 35 Men's team. He is well known for his passion, determination and sportsmanship...and for always bringing fun and a smile to the court!

Good luck in your new role, Hamid!



Jeff in mid guard of honour

Raising awareness of Motor Neurone Disease – A date with Mark O'Brien



Did you really just do that, Dad?

Many of you will know Mark O'Brien, a good friend of Herts Tennis who captains the Men's first teams at Rickmansworth and has represented the club in over 500 matches. Tragically, Mark has been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease (MND), a terminal condition that impacts the brain, nerves, and muscles and eventually leads to respiratory failure.

Now, as those of you who have played with or against him will testify, Mark is blessed with an abundance of spirit and determination. So, let's just say he was never going to lie down and call it quits. Oh no. Instead, he decided to take on a frankly unbelievable challenge, by attempting to break the World Record for the longest ever unaided open water swim for a person living with the condition. The distance? Well, his supporters turned up at Denham Lake last Sunday expecting it to be an already crazy 10.5km, then Mark announced live on BBC TV just before the swim that he was going to do an extra 500m. The editor has forbidden me from repeating what his Mum and Sister thought about that!

How did the record attempt go? The water was cold, there were horribly strong cross winds, Mark pulled his groin after just 4km which meant that for most of the swim he was using just one leg.....oh and he had hyperthermia at the end. Apart from that, brilliantly! This quite amazing man smashed the record, swimming for a whopping 5 hours 23 minutes and in an emotional finish, was joined by his wonderful children, Lauren, David and Georgia for the last 1.5km. What can I say. It was incredible.

I want to bring in Mark now to explain why the challenge was so important to him.

“Whilst I was a little late in life to tennis, it became a huge part of my life. I have loved visiting all the clubs in the county either as a player, captain or spectator. Although I cannot compete any more, it is still a privilege to be involved in tennis with the various first teams at Rickmansworth. I am immensely grateful for what life has given me and I actually feel really lucky to have experienced so many wonderful memories. Without being too morbid, this is my last swan song as far as sport is concerned and I would be incredibly grateful for any support you are able to offer.

My motivation for this challenge is:

1. To raise awareness of MND on a national and global basis
2. To help and inspire other people living with MND to know that ‘even the impossible can be possible.’
3. To raise funds for the MND Association, who support families impacted by MND
4. To raise funds for continued MND research to find a cure for MND
5. To leave my children, family, and friends with lifelong memories”

Grab a coffee and have a read about Mark’s story, journey and record swim on his just giving page <https://www.justgiving.com/page/mark-obrien-mndworldrecordswim>

We’re so proud of Mark and very proud also to see the tennis community come together in support. From the Barnet members who turned up to watch their Men’s team play Rickmansworth recently and donated in a tribute evening beautifully organised by Danny Williamson, to my good friend Tony Scott for such a generous donation on behalf of Hot Rackets, to all the members of David Lloyd Bushey for their fantastic contribution, to our own Basil Wein for his boundless enthusiasm in support of the cause. A huge thank you to every single one of you who has contributed in some way.

Are you or your club still able to donate? Yes, you are...and yes, please do!

Oh and don’t worry, Mark’s not going anywhere yet. Well, apart from Townsend next Sunday to cheer on his Rickmansworth team in the Harris Cup Final!



The Rickmansworth support crew get ready to celebrate!

Your chance to recognise those who make a difference to the sport we love



Radlett's Simon Spalter receives the LTA President's Award at the National Awards ceremony. (Simon is 6th from left in the back row)

Nominations for the LTA Tennis Awards for 2024 are up and running!

Yes, now is the time to think about all of those people who make a difference to how you enjoy your tennis and this is your chance to do something about it.

We saw some fantastic nominations across Hertfordshire last year, with two making it all the way to the National Finals (and one scooping the National Award!), but as a county we don't make anywhere near as many nominations as we should. I know from all the visits I've been making to clubs how much amazing stuff is going on at every single venue, yet at the vast majority of our clubs not a single nomination is made.

So, if you know a person, a club or even a school that is making a real difference to people's enjoyment of the game, do something about it today. Nominate them for an award using this link: <https://www.lta.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/lta-tennis-awards/>

There are lots of categories to choose from, including:

- Lifetime Achievement
- Volunteer of the Year
- Rising Star (Young Person)
- Development Coach of the Year
- Performance Coach of the Year
- Club of the Year
- Connecting Communities
- Park Venue
- School of the Year
- Competition of the Year
- Official of the Year
- Tennis for All (Inclusion)

Please don't do what lots of us do and assume somebody else will do it. Experience tells us they almost certainly won't. You have until the end of November to make your nominations.

Honesty – Excellence – Resilience – Teamwork – Sportsmanship

Going places with Ivan Deb

18-year-old Ivan Rodriguez Deb is the three-time national Men's champion in visually-impaired tennis and the youngest member of the GB squad. He was selected to represent Great Britain during the pandemic but missed the opportunity of going to the World Championships in 2020 as a result of the lockdown.

This summer however, he represented GB at both the IBSA World Games in Birmingham (the largest international event for elite visually impaired athletes in the world), where he won silver in the Men's singles and bronze in the Men's doubles, and at the International Blind Tennis World Championships in Krakow, Poland, where he once again took the silver medal.

Ivan has achieved all this with the support of his coach Paul Seymour, Racquets Manager at David Lloyd Northwood and his local club, West Herts and Watford LTC. Both clubs have kindly given Ivan access to their facilities to train which has been key to his success. The difference perhaps with Ivan's story is that both clubs are keen to support the idea that a visually impaired tennis player needs to train in the same way and with the same dedication and physical and mental discipline as any able-bodied player.

But there is a big difference in terms of funding available. There is, as yet, no prize money in visually impaired tennis (something that Ivan hopes will also change one day) and what makes Ivan's achievement even more incredible is that he paid to go to Poland himself, without having the funds to pay for his coach or a team to technically and emotionally support him at the competition, unlike players from the other countries in his category.

The aim is now to raise awareness and funds so that Ivan can return to the World Championships next year equipped with the resources that will help him bring back gold. If you feel you can help Ivan by offering to have a hit with him during the week or if you know of anyone who might be willing to sponsor him, please contact pradebuk@gmail.com.



Ivan wins silver for GB at the World Games



Ivan and Paul plot his next journey

Anticipation builds for this year's Harris Cup finals!

Get your summer gear back on and head along to Townsend this Sunday, 8th October, for the finals of the Harris Cup, the county's 2-Pair Knockout Cup competition.

Everybody is welcome to come and watch some of the county's best players in action at one of our friendliest clubs in what is its centenary year. Play starts at 10am and is expected to go on beyond 4pm, with refreshments to suit all tastes available throughout the day, including an open bar and barbeque.

The prospect of good weather and strong representation from the home club, who amazingly have managed to book their place in both finals, guarantees a bumper crowd and this is sure to be boosted by an always well supported Rickmansworth team that has knocked out three of the county's strongest clubs on route to the final and a St Albans team who are not just local rivals but also Herts League champions.

The Ladies final - 10am - Townsend v St Albans

Followed by

The Men's final - Not before 1.30pm - Rickmansworth v Townsend

So why not join me for a burger, a beer and some great tennis. Make sure you pack your sun cream though!

Townsend LTC, 8 Waverley Road, St Albans, AL3 5PA.

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/TownsendLawnTennisClub>



Last year's triumphant Townsend Ladies team. Can they do it again?

Honesty – Excellence – Resilience – Teamwork – Sportsmanship

The 2023 Herts League Champions unveiled

There are still one or two matches left to be played in this year's Herts league, but I can announce who our Men's and Ladies champions are for 2023. Huge congratulations to St Albans' Ladies and Welwyn's Men on coming out on top.

For St Albans it's their 2nd title on the bounce, having only ever previously won the event once in the competition's 75 year history, while Welwyn have won for the 4th time out of the last 6 competitions played.

In the Men's competition, Welwyn will be joined by two teams with vastly different Herts League pedigree next year, Elliswick and Rickmansworth, in what promises to be an exciting Championship Division. Although Rickmansworth have not sat at the top table for a long time and even dropped out of the league for a few years in 2016, they are former winners of the competition (in 1996 and 1998), whereas for Elliswick this is a historic moment. That showed magnificently when what must be the biggest crowd ever seen for a Herts League match turned out at the club in September for a crunch promotion decider against West Herts. As a West Herts member it was not easy being a neutral that day, but there's no doubt the better team won...and at least the vast majority of the huge crowd (all bar one) went home happy!



One section of what may be the biggest ever crowd for a Herts League match

The Elliswick Men's team celebrate making history



Honesty – Excellence – Resilience – Teamwork – Sportsmanship

The sun shines again for Mac's Charity Tournament at Welwyn!

The sun shone on the righteous and a wonderful atmosphere pervaded the whole day this August Bank Holiday as Welwyn's 9 courts were full of fun, love and generosity. The organisation on court by Nick and off court by Sue McFayden and her army of 16 volunteers was peerless. At the time of writing the money was still being counted, but it could be a record at £4500! Thank you to everybody, especially Barclays Bank for your donation, for what you have done.

The phenomenal catering was even better than last year's, which had been heralded as the best ever. What an incredible show of skill and heart by Sue's team. The raffle tickets went like hotcakes and the auction was incredibly exciting, with the French Villa Chez Aves going for an amazing £1,100. We were all reduced to tears by Mark and Maria's kindness and we wish them *bonnes vacances*. God is good to Maria and sent her Brandon to 'help' win the title! A special shout out also to all the youngsters who played and helped. They were a real credit to their families and our great club!

The highlight of the day was to support our chosen charity, Myotonic Dystrophy Support and the incredible people who run it, Pauline and Peter Ferrari; they came all the way down from Pontefract to tell us the stories of this rare but very serious condition and all the work that is going on for support and research. Both Pauline and Peter spoke so movingly that they will always have friends in Welwyn. Our dear Poole family and others in their position will benefit from both the resources raised as well as increased awareness of the condition.

Oh and there was great tennis all day! Well done and thank you to all the players, helpers, donors and sterling volunteers from the club and, most importantly, Myotonic Dystrophy Support.



Simon and Dotty Poole, Pauline Ferrari,
David and Claire Poole, Peter Ferrari



Maria and Brandon with the trophy.

Safeguarding and Welfare Officer Update



The 2023/2024 Venue Registration window has come around again and all Chairs will have received a link to a video guide on the venue portal to check if the current standards are met; there are no major changes this year.

County Safeguarding and Venue Welfare Officers have been given the opportunity to provide input into the new LTA Safeguarding Strategy which is likely to better recognise the importance of the role and provide additional support.

The new Safeguarding Awareness Week in October has proved popular, with many of the practical sessions becoming fully booked. You can still sign up to Izzey's Story, a real-life scenario developed by the University of Kent in conjunction with the LTA, volunteers, coaches and young people, which examines the dynamics of grooming and sexual abuse. Completing this will add one year to your existing basic safeguarding training.

Following the pilot of a couple of daytime Welfare Officer Networking Events earlier in the year, our grateful thanks to Elliswick for hosting an evening session in September, which Melissa Miller, our Regional Safeguarding Officer, was able to attend and then pass on invaluable feedback to the LTA Central Safeguarding Team. More offers to host are welcomed!

The LTA and Herts Tennis safeguarding pages are a useful signpost to information, policies and procedures, but please always feel free to approach me for guidance and advice; I will usually be able to respond to an email the same day!

Tessa Terry
County Safeguarding Officer
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<https://hertstennis.co.uk/about-about-us/safeguarding>
<https://lta.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding-protection>

**Photo courtesy of the LTA*