



Wrexham Squash

The Way Forward for Squash in Wrexham

This discussion document considers some of the issues around the progression of Junior Squash in 2005, bringing into use alternative venues in support of the Centre of Local Development at Phoenix.

Agenda.

- **Phoenix Squash Club**
- **Current Structure at Wrexham Squash Club**
- **Court availability**
- **Schools Squash Programme**
- **Queensway Leisure Centre**
- **Coaches**
- **Funding**
- **Older Young People**
- **Future Structure/Sustainability of Wrexham Junior Squash**

Phoenix Squash Club.

Phoenix Squash Club is based at Dean Road in Wrexham and is leased to Phoenix by NEWI on an annual basis. There are two squash courts available on a daily basis with the booking of courts controlled by NEWI by phone. Senior and junior members each have membership numbers which must be quoted when booking courts. Juniors are members of Wrexham Squash and the senior players members of the Phoenix Squash Club.

Facilities at the club are inadequate; they do not meet basic standards or, possibly, Health & Safety requirements. There is no washbasin in the ladies changing rooms and toilets for male members are in the adjoining football dressing rooms. The showers are reasonable with the water usually hot. A cleaner is employed by NEWI for a general clean. Club facilities generally do not encourage young people or adults to play squash. In addition, we have experienced issues of concern around individual safety and security of the building, particularly during the summer months when crowds of juveniles congregate on the field.

Phoenix runs a number of teams playing regular league squash. Ladies teams play on Mondays and Men's teams on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We also have a junior side that play on Tuesdays.

Points for Discussion: -

- 1. How can we improve facilities at Phoenix ?**
- 2. Are there any prospects for squash court developments at NEWI ?**

Junior Structure Wrexham Squash Club.

We have approximately 40/50 juniors of all ages up to 19 years currently being coached in squash at the club. The vast majority receive coaching based on the junior structure that follows the governing body (Squash Wales) guidelines for junior squash. Coaching sessions are held on Wednesdays from 4:00 – 8:10 and are spilt into 5 x 50 minute sessions.

The Centre of Local Development (COLD) comprises three twelve-week coaching sessions per year. These sessions are for children generally from 7 years to 13 years and are based on the ability of the child. This age group has been extended recently to aged 16. Three COLD sessions take place on the Wednesday evenings with the other two sessions taken up with beginners groups.

For quality coaching, COLD sessions should contain no more than 4 juniors per court, however, beginners groups can be up to 6 juniors per session although this is not recommended. But, if the numbers are there, it is difficult to turn these keen young people away.

Payment for the coaching under COLD is £33.00 per child per 12 weeks. Laurie Jones as Head coach is paid £12:50 per session with other Level One and Level Two coaches attending as unpaid assistants.

We also receive a payment of approximately £100:00 subsidy from Squash Wales at the end of each 12-week segment for the COLD sessions.

Juniors who show great promise and commitment maybe recommended to The Centre of Regional Excellence (CORE) by either the Coach or through playing success at tournaments. The next progression is Inter Counties Teams and then The National Squad of Wales.

We also run an extremely successful Club Night on Monday evenings from 5:00 - 7:15 pm with the younger juniors on court at 5:00 and the older ones at 6:00. These sessions are free of charge and consist of league matches and some general fitness training.

We have an average of 15 to 18 juniors attending these sessions, though this figure is likely to increase substantially in January 2005. Club Night supervision is in through Mark Davies, with help from Louise Jones until 6.00, after which Mark is on his own.

Points for Discussion: -

- 1 - COLD – Quality not Quantity !**
- 2 - Ability must be the key factor, but what do we do with those not good enough ?**
- 3 - All COLD players must enter local tournaments and parents should be involved**
- 4 – Do we use Phoenix for COLD sessions only and use the Monday Club Night to develop that same group of players, playing matches, etc ?**
- 5 – Club Night – Current format needs to be addressed. There are too many players, too few supervisors and not enough time.**

Court Availability.

Pressure on courts has not been an issue this season due to the small number of members joining Phoenix. Many choose to play their social squash at venues such as Total Fitness, primarily due to the poor facilities at Phoenix. They do, however, still play their competitive team matches at Phoenix.

This could of course change and then court availability would again present the junior section with problems. Court space at present is only sufficient for the current junior membership.

Points for Discussion: -

- 1 – Introduction of additional pupil sessions**
- 2 – Weekend Sessions**

Schools Squash Programme

This was started in 2003 with Wat's Dyke School in Wrexham with the invaluable help of their Headteacher, Alan Evans. We also had excellent support from the Wrexham Council Sports Development Team through Jo Clay and the Queensway Sports Centre.

We targeted Year 4 pupils and invited them to Queensway for an initial 5-week taster session, free of charge, to learn the basics of squash. When this course finished the pupils were given the opportunity to join Wrexham Squash. We received an 80% intake, which exceeded all our expectations. Some have since dropped out but these have been replaced by other juniors, some the brothers and sisters of existing players.

Two new 5-week taster sessions were started in Sept/Nov 2004 (one is still going on) based at Queensway. The Council have covered all costs but, in future, they will only cover the court costs and coaching fees will have to be covered by Wrexham Squash.

This programme is ongoing with Watts Dyke but other schools will be invited to participate. Alexandra School has approached us and we will be inviting their Headmaster Mr. Richard Jones to Queensway to view the taster sessions.

Points for Discussion: -

- 1 – Selection Process for pupils once taster session is concluded**
- 2 – Coach funding**
- 3 – Coaches availability**
- 4 – Schools Selection**

Queensway

We have utilized Queensway as the base for the schools squash programme with the pupils moving on to Phoenix if they wish to continue their squash coaching. This has worked particularly well for those involved so far.

Facilities are good at Queensway apart from a restricted viewing area. Part of the area has another facility (sunbeds) and this may cause a problem when we have large numbers of children wishing to watch the lesson on court.

Queensway must be a part of the Wrexham Squash plans and will have to be used in the future, probably when the latest taster sessions have ended. There will not be sufficient court times at Phoenix to take on more pupils. Some discussions have, therefore, taken place with Jo Clay and Queensway and they are in agreement that this facility should be used to encourage squash in the area.

Points for Discussion: -

- 1 – Continuation of schools squash programme (Coaches)**
- 2 – Optimum court times**
- 3 – Supervision, Coaches, etc**
- 4 – Monday Club Night at Queensway?**
- 5 – Wednesday Club Coaching**

Coaching

Laurie Jones is Head Coach at Wrexham and works full time in his position. Other newly qualified Level 1 and Level 2 coaches help him. The biggest problem we are up against is that the coaches, apart from Laurie, are in other full time employment. A couple of the Level 1 coaches are still in school or college. This restricts their ability to coach at certain times of the day and evenings.

All these assistant coaches are unpaid at present but this will have to be taken into consideration should we develop other venues for squash coaching.

It is likely that Wrexham Squash will be using Queensway for coaching in 2005 and it will be important, therefore, to encourage the Level 1 coaches to progress and take their Level 2 coaching badge.

Points for Discussion: -

- 1 – Encourage parents & players to take up coaching to at least level 1**
- 2 – Parent participation (Supervision)**
- 3 – COLD Coaches/Club Coaches**
- 4 – Conditions of coaching**

Funding

We have received monies from the Community Chest Fund to support coaching courses and purchase equipment. We have a fee income from the children who participate in the 12-week junior coaching sessions and from the one-off £10 joining fee to Wrexham Squash. The fee income is sufficient to cover the cost of the coaching but the other coaches are currently giving their services for no payment. Payment to additional coaches could be a problem.

Other funding is gratefully received from By-Product Services, who sponsor the juniors' Tee shirts and from Russell and Anne Evans who continue to support our Annual Closed Tournament in presenting trophies.

Points for Discussion: -

- 1 - What other funding is available?**
- 2 – Queensway. Can we request a separate community chest grant?**
- 3 – How do we make the best use of any funding?**
- 4 – Pay & Play**

Our Older Young People

This is another area of great concern at Wrexham Squash, how do we retain the interest and encourage further development of our juniors at age 16 +.

Some of these juniors are playing in the North Wales League on Tuesdays and that is extremely beneficial. Others who could become good club players have fallen by the wayside due to our inability to establish an appropriate and on-going structure for them. Some of these players still attend Club Night on Mondays and do play a series of matches against each other.

We have tried to set up an evening with some of the senior Club players, playing one on one to provide a real stretch to these young people, but this has not proved to be sustainable. We do not want to lose these players, as they are the future of the club.

Points for Discussion

- 1 - How can we develop our structure to reflect the needs of these older juniors and in a way that encourages them to continue their development through to age 19.**

Future Structure & Sustainability

With the steady numbers of young people attending coaching sessions and the schools squash programme looking set to continue this trend, for as long as the coaches and schools wish to continue, Wrexham Squash appears to be in a healthy state.

Phoenix Squash Club is very close to reaching saturation point but with the Queensway Sports Centre and staff on board, however, this does alleviate the problem for the foreseeable future and we do hope that the Plas Madoc Leisure Centre will also join the programme at some stage.

The future structure for the long-term viability of junior squash in Wrexham must be based on the Squash Wales criteria for the COLD programme. Wrexham Squash now needs to define its own club coaching role for young people and identify those who show particular promise to progress to COLD, possibly even replacing juniors already in the COLD system.

It is apparent that we are still not getting the best out of the young people. Why?

There is a need to improve a number of key areas if COLD to work well in Wrexham:

- ❑ Coaching – One coach per 4 players (Level 1 + Level 2)
- ❑ More intense coaching without taking out the fun element
- ❑ COLD players need to seek more frequent and competitive play within their cohort.
- ❑ COLD players should enter local tournaments in North Wales
- ❑ Coaches should be setting goals for COLD groups
- ❑ There must be a commitment from coaches to sustain the programme
- ❑ More coaches need to be found.
- ❑ Level one coaches need to be encouraged to reach level 2 standard
- ❑ Parents need to be notified of their child's progression.
- ❑ Parents need to be aware of the squash scene and the application that is required if their son / daughter are to progress their skills to a high standard.
- ❑ One to One coaching with COLD players or other players needs to be discussed and co-ordinated within Wrexham Squash, particularly when some of the younger players may not be ready for that level of commitment.

These points are fundamental in achieving quality squash players in the Wrexham area, while those juniors who are not part of COLD will still have the opportunity to attain the grade if the coaches think they are suitable.

We are fully aware the conditions and facilities at both venues. They do have their faults but, at this time, they are what we have and, for the members of Wrexham Squash, we do have to make the best of them.

With the help of the new Regional Development Officer for North Wales, Phil Carnell in place from Jan 1st and the coaches who are willing and able, plus the support of parents / volunteers at our coaching and club sessions, we are convinced we can achieve great things in Wrexham with the children we have in place now and in the future.

December 2004

