

Resume read out at DBE Celebration Evening at Solihull IBC on Saturday 5th November 2016

Charity Status & new Board of Directors

What a year & how far we have come in such a short time.

The new board of directors has worked incredibly hard to increase awareness and opportunity to participate, compete and enjoy playing bowls.

The events held are visible evidence of the time & effort put in by the directors, but many more hours work has gone on behind the scenes to develop and maintain an organisation fit for purpose. Meetings, policy making, form filling & forging external links has been essential in creating a solid and proactive association.

Chairman: **Paul Brown**

Secretary & Competitions: **Margaret Smith**

Finance Director: **Duggy Mitchell**

Sponsorship and Grant co-ordinator: **Shirley Hughes**

Membership Data Base co-ordinator general: **Bob Love**

General Director without port folio: **Ray Smith**

Player Development & Elite Performance: **Mo Monkton**

During the year **David Stott** was appointed DBE VI Coach and **Gill Allibone**, DBE Physiotherapist. The web site, designed & hosted by Dennis Bell at DBN Web Design is now maintained & regularly updated by volunteer **John Rogers** from Tamworth BC who adds reports, photo's and news items. With almost 200 members the web site will become even more important and aims to become a "one stop shop" for all Disability Bowls England matters. It is looking great and sure to evolve as the association grows.

A year in brief:-

We held 5 Regional Training/Taster sessions: Taunton in the SW, Selby in the North, Nottingham & Kettering in the Midlands and Sutton in the SE.

We played the first International Test Match against Scotland at Gedling IBC (which England won!).

We took a team of 5 VI Triples to play against Royal Wootton Bassett Club.

We held the first Outdoor National Open Pairs Comp; stand up R/U **Steve Bigg & Jonathan Stokes** + Winners **Gemma Broadhead & Chris Gray**.

We competed in the International Home Nations Championships held outdoor at Kelvingrove, Glasgow. It involved 10 players with a physical disability and 5 visually impaired players, against teams from Scotland & Wales.

We took a 6 rink mixed disability team to play Berkhamsted (BE 2015 Club of the Year) & to Didcott to play against the Bowls England President, Michael Jennings Select Team.

We held the first outdoor Inter Region, Double Rink Challenge won by the **South East - Capt. David Fisher**, along with **Ron Rowden, Marjorie Convey, Bob Henstridge, Barry Jones, Andrew Taylor, Jonathan Stokes & Gill Platt**.

To round off a great season the board has decided to make 3 awards:- Player of the Year, Most Improved Player and a DBE Special Award, which this year is for Endeavour. Going forward, these awards may change and perhaps more added next year.

Margaret & Steve Watson of Sporting Highlights presented the trophies:-

The DBE Special Award.

This was awarded to someone who has shown huge determination to “get on with life”, to overcome any obstacles and get back to playing the sport he loves. A top county U25 player with the skills and ambition to play at International level suffered a set back when diagnosed with a brain tumour. Albeit now playing from a wheelchair and without sight he is determined to get back to winning ways and with the great support of his family, and undoubted ability, is doing just that. His endeavour and determination is an inspiration and we awarded the DBE Special Award for Endeavour to **Andrew Taylor of Cove Bowling Club, Hampshire.**

The Most Improved Player.

This young man first came onto the scene at a training taster day at Gedling Indoor BC and his progress & improvement has continued on an upward spiral all summer. He, along with his playing partner won the DBE Open Pairs, he represented the Midlands Squad in the Inter Region and has recently won the EALABA Singles. He has won several club competitions, awarded his county cap and picked up 2 trophies at the Kettering Sports Awards. Over the season his progress and confidence has grown and we are pleased to give the most improved player award to **Chris Gray, Burton Latimer Town BC, Northamptonshire.**

Player of the Year.

This was a tough one as many players have performed well in the matches, competitions and International events. The player chosen, as well as representing his club and County, including the successful Middleton Cup Team played in all DBE games, skipped well in the open pairs, helped his squad win the Inter Region and performed to a very high standard at the Home Nations Championships. This year we are very pleased to award the Player of the Year to **Jonathan Stokes, Luton Town BC, Bedfordshire.**

With the large number of new members we are delighted to announce that alongside experienced classifiers **Margaret Smith** and **Sally Domville**, this summer **Gill Allibone** passed the exam and joined their team. This is the first full classification team for players with a Disability in the Northern Hemisphere and it is hoped that the Chief International Classifier will fly in from Australia next year, access and pass the team to International Standard. This is a huge move and very positive for the progress of disability bowls in the UK & Europe.

We are steadily gathering a great group of coaches throughout England who will be key figures in organising local events, recruiting & training volunteers and providing opportunities that will reduce travel time for players.

Thank you **Fran Lloyd, Michael Chamberlain** - Midlands. Others who could not be here tonight include **Sue White** and **Denise Smith** – South East, **Gary Jackson & Tony Ward** – South West, & from the North, **Arthur Fall & John Fear** who, after helping at our training/taster day have purchased a full set of training equipment and started a bowling session for people with disability in the community centre in Selby.

Each of the clubs we have visited have proved to be great hosts, provided a warm welcome to our players and helped raise awareness of the opportunities at their own club and clubs throughout the regions. Many others helped out at various events, none more so than the volunteers at Gedling IBC. At every event they attend in force, helping Margaret run the competitions, push wheelchairs up and down, direct & help the visually impaired and generally do whatever needs to be done. All in their own time & always with a kind word and a smile.

Gedling IBC has been a flagship for disability bowls, a great ambassador for the sport and a template for good practice. Thank you Maggy and volunteers.

Various sponsors have helped throughout the year:-

Kingsway Gears of Bristol and The Dorset Bowls Resort helped finance the Home Internationals and Aceit sportswear kindly provided shirts and jackets to our Internationals players.

Drakes Pride donated their range of disability aids and accessories which we have taken around the country. This gave players the opportunity to try before they buy and help people with a disability start to or continue to play the sport.

The local press in different regions has given us good coverage, whilst Bowls International has done several features on disability bowls.

We have had meetings with other National Governing Bodies:- Bowls England, BDA, EIBA & EFDS to mention a few. We hope these meetings will bring more opportunities for players with a disability, increase accessibility and generally promote the sport. Bowls England President Michael Jennings chose Disability Bowls England as his "Charity of the Year" and raised money through friendly matches, raffles and spiders and was most upset to find he had to be on official duty at a county dinner tonight, but sent us a message (see Appendix 1).

Michaels efforts this summer and our participation at the Commonwealth Games, with the Bowls England Squad, has made disability bowls much more accepted and inclusive. Ellen Falkner, Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist attended the Masters Singles and is a huge supporter. She would love to have attended this evening, but has other commitments. However, she also sent a message (see Appendix 2)

Sporting Highlights were our main sponsor for the very successful 'Inter Region' event held at Daventry and money given covered the cost of the event which included, stickers, meals for the players, the new perpetual "Margaret Smith Shield" & trophies for the winners etc..

We are very grateful to Sporting Highlights, in particular Steve Watson and delighted that he could be here tonight and invite him to say a few words to round off the report on this seasons efforts.

Moving on, we have a varied schedule lined up for this indoor season, including:

More Regional Training/Taster Sessions and matches at various venues throughout England.

The International Trials (this weekend) followed by a squad training day.

An Indoor Open Pairs Competition.

The Masters Singles comp which includes champions for each of the disability sectors.

A tour to Potters Bowls Resort.

A DBE Team competing in a Potters Comp.

The Home Nations Championships against Scotland & Wales.

The Indoor Inter Region "Top Region" Double rink challenge.

I am sure the Board will have noted suggestions & comments made at the open forum earlier and will try to provide what you the players want.

To round up we would like to thank Solihull IBC for their hospitality, use of their facilities and very warm welcome throughout this whole weekend. Thanks also to Jenny at Honeygold Caterers, the buffet was fabulous.

But mostly a HUGE thanks to you.. over 100 here at our first celebration is fantastic and I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening.

We will now have a 15 min break before a short quiz, raffle.
Thank you.

Appendix 1: Message from Michael Jennings – Bows England President

“To all my fellow bowlers and friends

This whole year has been quite an exciting year for me having been to so many clubs and meeting such lovely people during it. But one of my highlights of the year was the match at Didcot Bowls Club against you all. I had a Presidents select team to play against you on that day and you beat us hollow. The day went extremely well and was so well organised. The company was excellent and the friendliness of you all will remain with me forever.

I was so impressed with you and your wonderful attitude I know that whoever you meet and wherever you go you will be so welcome there.

I wish you all such an enjoyable future and I look forward to being in your company again soon.
Your good bowling friend
Michael”

Appendix 2: Message from Ellen Falkner, Commonwealth Games 3 times Gold Medallist

“I’m really sorry that I could not be with you this weekend, but I would just like to take this opportunity to congratulate everyone involved in the hugely successful work around the development of disability bowls in England. From the tremendous work going on in clubs to engage more disabled people in bowls to the elite level where great time and effort has gone into creating a pathway and system to help players progress from club to international level.

Earlier this week, I presented the Love, Fisher, Brown award to Scarborough Indoor Bowls Club with Paul Brown, where the commitment and dedication of the players, carers and club was clear for all to see. I really hope that more clubs follow the examples set by Plymouth Life Centre and Scarborough in their approach to creating an environment for everyone to enjoy our beloved sport where the focus is on ability not disability.

At the elite level, I have been privileged to play in two Commonwealth Games alongside para team mates where Games highlights and inspirational moments came from watching and willing on para team mates onto medal success. The coverage and interest that was generated from Glasgow in particular and the number of people inspired as a result was certainly evident when talking to some of the younger competitors at the Masters event in Gedling. The standard of play at the Masters event was extremely high and it was played in a great spirit. For me it was exactly how World class bowls should be - exciting, close with the head changing with every bowl.

To the volunteers and organisers, thank you for all that you are doing to create change. And to the players, one of my mantras, “Its not what you win, its how you win that defines you both as a player and as person”.

I hope you have a great evening and weekend and long may the great work continue.

Ellen”