



Clacton & District: Busy times ahead

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: January 07, 2019

It's going to be a busy few months for the Clacton & District League, starting with the Handicapped Singles Tournament on Saturday 2nd February at Windsor's St James Hall venue.

The tournament will be run this year on a group basis and, with eight groups of four and the top two going through to the knock-out stage, every player should be guaranteed at least three matches. There will be a maximum of 32 players so entry will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Entries can be made by post to Tony Oswick or on-line to Peter White. The entry fee is £3 and the closing date for entries is Sunday 27th January. Full details are on the League's website.

After this, planning will start for the Closed Championships which take place over the weekend of 13th and 14th April at the Clacton Coastal Academy Sports Hall. As with the Handicapped Singles, full details will be sent to all players and will appear on the League's website.

And, of course, this week's sees the start of the main action in the Knock-Out Cup, with 32 of the League's teams competing in Round Two of the competition. The final takes place on Tuesday 30th April at the Brotherhood Hall.

Junior Coaching continues on Monday evenings at the Coastal Academy Sports Hall and the League will also be working with local schools to promote table tennis in the Tendring area. In addition, the League is making arrangements to be represented at the Tendring Show on Saturday 13th July.

Finally, the League will also be organising a fun quiz at the Brotherhood Hall on Saturday 16th March. More details to follow.

* All of us in the Clacton League were saddened to learn of the death of John Long who passed away just before Christmas.

It was a credit to John that he carried on playing competitive table tennis well into his 80s, continuing to play in his traditional style, dancing around the table determined to win every point. It is also to John's great credit that,

even though he'd once been Clacton's Men's Singles champion, he was prepared to move down the Divisions, such was his love of table tennis and desire to compete.



John Long pictured in 2017

In his prime, John was a top-class player winning League, Cup and Closed Championship trophies.

He won his first major Closed trophy in 1967 when, with Sheila Howe, he took the Mixed Doubles title, retaining the title the following season. Five years later in 1973, John achieved the pinnacle of being crowned Men's Singles champion for the first and only time, defeating Len Meakin 21-9, 21-11 in the final. But a Men's Doubles title always eluded him, his closest effort being in 1982 when, partnered by John Holt, he was a losing finalist.

On reaching the Veterans' stage, John dominated the event for 10 years between 1978 and 1987, appearing in eight Veterans' Singles finals. He won the title four times, in 1977, 1980, 1981 and 1983, those four wins ranking him third in the all-time list of Veterans' Singles winners behind Ken Gladwell and Derek Wood.

And when a Super-Veterans' event was introduced, John once again dominated that event in its early stages, winning the inaugural Super-Vets' Singles title in 1999, and taking it twice more in 2000 and 2003.

John also tasted League success with a Division One winners' trophy in 1997 in the Walton B side with John Holt, Claude Snell and John Rice. It was something of an Indian summer for John who, that season, finished eighth in the rankings with an average of over 75%.

There was also success in the Knock-Out Cup with Walton B in 1983 alongside Holt and Brian Rowlen, and again in 1993 when the Walton B side of Long, Snell and Holt won a classic match 5-4 against the 'young Turks' of St

Andrews A, Martin Hogg, Iain Vine and Colin Stallwood. At the time, the Walton side was credited as being the oldest team ever to take the trophy with a combined age of over 150 years.

In his 50-plus years of local table tennis, John won many trophies but he'll be always be remembered as a player full of enthusiasm for his sport, a player who always gave 100% every match, a player who was a dogged, determined opponent who refused to give up.

As importantly for anyone who knew him socially, John was an easy-going, mild-mannered and amiable friend, a true gentleman on and off the table who never had a bad word to say about anyone. We'll miss you, John.

Downloaded From:

<https://newsarchive.tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/local-news/clacton-district-busy-times-ahead/>