



How Be TT helped our League of the Year

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: July 31, 2019

Table Tennis England's League of the Year, Weymouth & District League, have been given a big helping hand by our Be TT programme.

Andy Millar, Development Officer of the league, tells us how the support received from Table Tennis England has helped the league develop and grow over the past few seasons.

Junior Support

The Junior game in Weymouth has benefitted from invaluable Be TT support. This season, we introduced a new Junior League to run alongside the regular league, which was a weekly competition played at a central venue.

The Junior League was innovative in that we did not concentrate on one set format of competition. We wanted to be able to welcome new players at any time to join in and we appreciated that players (and parents) had busy lifestyles, meaning that they could not attend every week.

We ran a series of competitions which could cater for new and occasional players, but also reward those that turned up as often as they could.

We started off with a League ladder, which involved challenging players to move up the ladder and ran this at various times through the season. Early on, we also added two weekly challenges. The first was always the warm-up, which was 'Round the Table', the last players left accumulating points; and also serving challenges which focused players on an important area of the game.



As the season progressed, we introduced a weekly league system of three to four players **in each division**, with regular promotion and relegation **between the divisions** and also a doubles competition. In the last half term, we played a round-robin singles competition to find our Junior champion.

These competitions were thoroughly enjoyed by the players and the coaches who helped run them and they gave the players a great variety to look forward to each week. Many players transitioned to National Cadet League and a few to the Weymouth League over the season.

Adult participation

Be TT has also helped the WDTTL transform their approach to adult participation, though it did take a while to settle on a successful format. The youth section was thriving, but the adult numbers were dropping, mainly due to the age profile and 'retirement' of members.

Performance adult coaching had been running for a number of years, which appealed to higher-placed Weymouth League players. It did not cater for returning players and beginners who attended once or twice, but most found it too competitive.

Two years ago, we introduced monthly adult coaching for beginners and improvers and this proved very popular. However, the feedback was clear that this needed to be on a more regular basis as players wanted to practise every week. Therefore, this year we introduced weekly sessions, which proved more popular than we ever imagined.

Several adult players from these sessions are now signing up to play for league teams next season, and those who do not want to play in the league are looking forward to starting up practice again in the summer.

We have been very lucky to have great support from many adult coaching volunteers, who have dedicated

hours of their time to help the above projects and others the WDTTL have been running, such as female and primary school table tennis sessions.

Youth Presentations

The Weymouth & District Table Tennis League held their first youth presentation event at Steps Club for Young People. The event was the idea of youth player, Sophie Storey, which included every squad player being presented with certificates detailing their competition entries and achievements during the season.

Youth table tennis celebrated a successful year with medals in the National Cadet League for Dorchester and Weymouth; Budmouth College reached the Schools Team Regional Finals at Bristol in three age groups and several players represented Dorset at County Championship level. The certificates also highlighted many local competitions, including league and schools events for all ages and abilities.

Junior League trophies were also handed out for competitions that have been run on Monday evenings at All Saints School this season.



As well as the presentations, the league robot was a popular challenge and players and families joined in a fun mixed doubles competition, eventually won by a mother and son partnership, Sam and Mel Melhuish.

Weymouth and Dorchester are now looking for players aged eight and upwards to join the squads for next season. For further details on how to get involved and to join the Junior League starting in September, please contact Andy Millar (a.millar212@gmail.com or 07710 507075).

Junior League Winners

Junior League champion: Louis Stoker; runner-up: Dan Howe

Doubles winners: Jude Hughes and Louis Stoker

Round the Table winner: Ben Chen; runner-up: Zach Barras

Serving Challenge winner: Zach Barras; runner-up: Nathan Bushell

League Ladder winner: Dan Howe; runner-up: Louis Stoker

Sophie Storey – Young Ambassador



Sophie Storey recently was presented with her first volunteering certificate from the Young Ambassador Programme. Dorset coach Matt Ware is pictured presenting the certificate to Sophie.

Sophie joined the Young Ambassador programme in January and has been involved in a project to help more

beginner girls at coaching sessions. Sophie has also volunteered to be a ball girl at the National Championships and is currently organising an end of season presentation event for the Weymouth youth players.

Sophie plays for Budmouth College in the Weymouth & District Table Tennis League and has represented Weymouth and Dorset at cadet level this season and recently been selected to represent the South-West at the Inter-Regionals in June.

[Click here to read more about how Young Ambassadors are getting involved in the league](#)

Sophie said: "I enjoy the volunteering and helping young children get involved with table tennis, as there's not as many young people getting involved as in other sports. I hope to help increase the number of players and especially help to encourage and inspire young girls in getting further with table tennis.

"I also really enjoyed the opportunity that I had to be a ball girl at the National Championships held in Nottingham, as it was inspiring to see players like Tin-Tin Ho and Maria Tsaptsinos achieve what they can at such a high level and I would like to try and get there one day myself."

Andy Millar added: "The introduction of the Young Ambassador programme has been an excellent investment for our league coaching programme. The Young Ambassadors have all been beginners themselves before and they understand what is required to improve and how they can inspire the next generation of players.

"Sophie has a great rapport with the younger players and she is building up good coaching experience if she wants to take that further."

Still to come . . .

Next season, we are looking to introduce a new adult pairs league, which will run alongside the adult coaching sessions later in the season. Also, we are looking to run a new block of 'This Girl Can' sessions which, last time we ran, attracted more than 50 participants.

Table Tennis England's Area Development Officer, Gemma Parry, said: "The Weymouth League have had such a fantastic few seasons and have really taken on board all the support Table Tennis England has offered and developed it into something that really worked on the ground for their league.

"They have, in Andy Millar, the most innovative and creative forward-thinking Development Officer who is forever developing the league into something that it fit for purpose for the area and for the need of the participants. Loved and respected by club participants both young and old, Andy is such a force of nature.

"The League of the Year Award was so very much deserved, and I cannot wait to see how the league progresses this season. Well done everyone on the league committee, the volunteers and coaches, and especially to Andy Millar. A very, very successful season."



Board member Mike Smith (left) with representatives of Weymouth & District TTL at the Pride of Table Tennis Awards presentation

Downloaded From:

<https://newsarchive.tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/archived/how-be-tt-helped-our-league-of-the-year/>