



Aldershot league ready to pick up new format after lockdown

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Aldershot & District League's new two-player format was a big success before the latest lockdown – and the league is ready to pick up from where it left off after restrictions are lifted.

League Chairman Derek Seager reports a total of 41 teams entered the league, in four divisions and playing at three venues which could assure social distancing requirements were met.

The league's usual format has historically been three-player teams, but the pandemic restrictions and advice from Table Tennis England prompted the league to vary that this season.

The format also made sense because a number of the league's players chose to sit out while the virus is still in general circulation.

Derek said: "We've had to tailor our approach and the idea is to get people playing. We asked people if they wanted to play as soon as possible, from January 2021, or from next season – we asked them to choose and then made up the teams from there.

"There's quite a few people who have been shielding because of their age and have decided not to play until things look a little rosier, which is perfectly understandable.

"We got the league going, and it was going quite nicely until the Government stopped us. We stopped on the Monday (November 2) so every team had played the same number of matches.

"The people who've been playing have thoroughly enjoyed it and we're ready to go when the brakes come off again and we'll carry on where we left off."

Derek thanked the league committee organisers Dave Brown, Trevor Spraggs, Phil Snelson and Peter Bone for working hard to get the league up and running this season. He also said most teams actually had squads of

three or four players, playing in rotation to give the opportunity for more people to play.

Consolidating the league into three venue was a product of some venues not being big enough to allow social distancing and others being reluctant to open to hirers.

"We've got about 12-14 clubs involved but a lot don't have their premises," said Derek. "So we looked at the major clubs which had extra space to be able to accommodate other clubs. We're playing at Farnborough Tennis TTC and Ash TT.

"Farnborough had previously built an extension to their clubhouse for table tennis, and at Ash there are three halls – one with two tables and two with one table. Cody TTC are also playing at two venues, although not able to let other clubs hire them.

"If it was a three-man team, we wouldn't have been able to use the two smaller halls at Ash.

"We've got the ability to run two-man leagues in larger halls and there's also the possibility of starting at 6pm and getting two matches in.

"Table Tennis England gave us a tremendous boost, helping us know what we could do and couldn't do and how many people could play in a space.

"It's very unusual for us to play a two-man competition as for years we've been running three-man competitions. But it's really made such a difference."

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