



Why #SaveOurSports campaign matters

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Table Tennis England is supporting the #SaveOurSports campaign which is calling for a Sports Recovery Fund to be set up by the Government to support the sport sector through the pandemic.

Below, members of the table tennis family describe some of their experiences during and between the lockdown periods and how they have managed to keep going as much as possible.

[Click here to read more about the #SaveOurSports campaign and to sign the petition](#)

Wallasey Redcaps

Peter Jones writes

Wallasey Redcaps Table Tennis Club was formed towards the beginning of the year and use The Belvidere Community Centre as their playing space. Due to the guidelines from Table Tennis England and prompt communications, table tennis has been our core activity throughout Covid.

When we were able to play, table tennis was easy to run safely and gave the centre a function in the community. Table tennis is possible to play in bubbles of six and lends itself to that number of people compared to a lot of other sports. Smaller groups gave our players more time to practice, which meant we were noticing faster improvements in their performance.

We recruited about 17 new players and managed to attract some players in their 60s, who once played in their youth. We have taken a negative situation and turned it into a positive, and anticipate the time when we can return fully.

Cape Cornwall TTC

David May writes

I am a retired Primary School Headteacher and have coached table tennis to children for about 40 years. I now coach at Cape Cornwall Table Tennis Club in St Just.

Of course everything stopped during Covid, but when the evening club sessions restarted, this was amazing! Every one of my evening group turned up and the boys and girls practised and played with such joy and enthusiasm, at a level I had never experienced before. They loved it so much, it is very difficult to explain in words! It was as though they had been cooped up and constrained, and suddenly let free, which they were.

Before the latest lockdown, sessions felt as if they were gradually returning to normality, still wonderful, but not like that first session. Sadly, these 11 to 14 year olds would normally now be playing in our local West Cornwall League, but this hadn't restarted before the second lockdown. They're heartbroken now we've had to stop again.

Saltwood TTC

Steve Bispham writes

Saltwood table tennis club is a small club situated between Folkestone and Ashford in Kent. Our club was formed in 2016 and, every year since inception, our A team has been Premier division champions in the local league in which we compete (Folkestone).

In part, our success can be attributed to the fact that we are now the only club in our league to offer a club night to members and non members of all levels of play. This has brought new players to our sport, strengthened our teams in both quantity, quality and player development. We are one of the few multiple table venues in our league, therefore able to play up to three matches simultaneously.

Once Covid struck, the league programme was suspended on 16th March. This had little impact on the league as only two weeks were left. However, the pandemic caused us to cancel plans for a summer competition and also to shut the club – meaning no more club nights. In any event, the trustees of our venue, a large village hall used for multiple activities, not just table tennis, closed the premises for hiring.

From August we were able to resume club nights and practice sessions. This has, of course, meant complying with Covid-related conditions, such as table cleaning, sanitising, risk assessments and social distancing, track and trace etc.

We restricted club night to members only and sessions only available to those who pre-booked. Each session was restricted to two hours and had a nominated session director, who is responsible for ensuring that the conditions are met and a record kept of attendees in case needed. The maximum number of participants is six on any one session.

A large number of our members, particularly the older players, have expressed great caution about returning to play until the pandemic is over or a reliable vaccination programme is in place.

All our members are missing competitive table tennis but, thankfully, none has said they will not return when things get back to 'normal'.

Bury St Edmunds TTC

John Waters writes

Our Club works in a school who welcomed us back at the start of term – in fact we probably could have used the facility during the school holidays, they were so accommodating.

Since we started back in early September we have had between 15 and 20 juniors attend our sessions each

week, with parents being very pleased with everything we have done to ensure their children are safe and still getting exercise and good coaching. They were all working hard and enjoying their TT before the latest lockdown. The whole Club Committee worked very hard to make this happen and we had excellent support from parents.

12 to 15 adults have also attended our Friday session each week – not as many as last season but a good number for us.

Financially we will make a loss at least for this school term but are planning to use our reserves to keep the sessions going. Table Tennis England have kindly supported us through a Be TT grant to help us run a Junior League in the New Year, and also to help with paying for cleaning materials.

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