

Match Secretary's Report to the AGM on 10th November 2018.

The 2018 season has come and gone without any major problems. However I have concerns about future season matches if the current trend of reducing applications for matches and the threat of increased costs continues.

I don't have the figures for the ladies, but 17 men who applied for matches in 2017 did not apply in 2018. This is due in the main to health and advancing age. Against that only 2 people who have played before came back to play again and one of those was simply to get his Badge, or Flash as it is now. Only two new men applied, although the ladies had several new people asking for games.

There has also been a continuing high number of people withdrawing after selection. On one occasion 11 people who had been selected, withdrew from a men's match, which makes it very difficult to field a full team, (which we did in this case), however genuine the reasons. This has resulted in both men and ladies having to play one match with only 5 rinks, which I can't remember happening before. I hope this situation can be improved for 2019.

My other concern for the future relates to cost, and there are signs that in some counties it is becoming increasingly difficult to find clubs which are either able or willing to host county matches at a reasonable charge. We are lucky in Somerset that so far we have not had any problems with this, but Hampshire and Devon are good examples of Counties where clubs are increasing costs to a prohibitively high level. Although research last year suggested that cost is not an issue with players, I believe it is for a number of them, and any increase in match fees would, I believe, give us an even bigger problem with numbers. I further believe we will need to revisit the whole question of how we finance matches if this does happen. A reduction in the number of matches we play could be a possible way forward.

For 2019 the way we organise matches is being changed. Since unification, all matches have been arranged by The Match Secretary, and this is a very big undertaking. To spread the load in the future, the organising of matches is being undertaken by the Assistant Match Secretaries. These are the people who have been running some of the matches by sending out team selections and acting as the official on match day. So Nancy Winsborough will be doing this for Johns and Walker Cup, Jill Price for ladies League and Friendly matches, and Peter Bissett for all Junior matches, boys and girls. This work involves confirming dates, venues and costs, as well as sending out team selections, booking umpires when necessary, and keeping results for archives etc. I will continue to organise the men's Friendly and Cup matches as well as The Middleton, Balcomb, and Executive and Presidential Matches. Paul Davies will continue to act as Assistant Match Secretary for Executive and Presidential matches, and will select teams in conjunction with The Presidents, send out team selections, run matches on match day, and keep records for archive purposes. Everyone running matches is also responsible for accounting for the money involved.

I will continue to be responsible for the Match Secretariat overall and coordinating the work done by the others.

I believe this change will result in a smoother operation because people are involved from the beginning thus shortening lines of communication.

Alan Gray