

## **THE BRENTWOOD SPORTS ESSEX OPEN TENNIS TOURNAMENT 2008**

With our wonderful sponsors, especially Brentwood Sports ([www.brentwoodsports.co.uk](http://www.brentwoodsports.co.uk)) in place and 50 plus Billericay club members volunteering for everything from car parking to catering, bar duty to bin emptying and toilet cleaning to clubhouse hoovering we were ready. Over the previous six months the tournament committee and club members had worked hard planning everything from the tournament itself to preparing, cleaning and stocking the kitchen, bar, clubhouse and grounds.

As usual we had agreed some rain contingency plans with Brentwood Hard LTC (as they had done with us for their May tournament) but in spite of this we still kept our fingers crossed.

We need not have worried. Once again excellent weather favoured the tournament – not only did we only lose about one hours play during the week but the only downpour occurred seconds after the winning shot was hit in the last final to finish!

Following the great success of using a full-time tennis referee and professional, independent, LTA court supervisors for the last two years we were delighted to welcome David Fuchs ([www.tournaments.org.uk](http://www.tournaments.org.uk)) and his team back to Billericay. In 2007, one point of interest had been that despite offering entry and payment by credit card over the internet some 60% of entries were still 'on paper' or by cheque and I questioned whether or not Essex people were less computer literate than other counties! This year saw this situation being reversed with some two thirds of entries being made and paid for online!

As usual there was a fairly slow entry level to the tournament until the last week when an explosion of interest took us to a fully subscribed level – exactly the same as in 2007.

As in previous years we planned to run at least 8 matches per day per court on each of our ten courts plus up to 22 finals on the Saturday. With the final Singles entry numbers at around 412, plus all the Doubles and Plate competitions we calculated that we might have to play 450 plus matches if all went as planned i.e. run at close to maximum capacity!

At precisely 9 am on Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup> July the first ten matches went on court and play continued until the last final finished at 3.15 pm on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

The only sour note of the entire week was that behaviour by a small minority of the competitors fell way below acceptable standards. Billericay LTC had determined from the very first time that we took over running the competition that we would ensure that players upheld traditional tennis etiquette and that swearing, racket throwing and general opponent and equipment abuse etc would not be tolerated. Our professional LTA supervisors were instructed accordingly. It was extremely disappointing therefore that over the week a total of 45 player

code violations were issued and additionally we had to eject one player from the competition for a wanton act of vandalism on club property and another was banned from BLTC's ground for twelve months for unacceptable behaviour on and off the courts. We recognise that we are rigorous in the way that we apply LTA behaviour standards and that this may not be the case at other events. However we are confident that these standards are applied consistently and fairly and we are heartened by the number of parents that express their support for our approach.

Notwithstanding this disappointment we saw some fantastic tennis with David Wright and Francesca Stephenson both deservedly winning their respective U18 titles. Simon Evans and Christie Brackett won the Open Men's and Ladies titles respectively.

For those who like statistics we saw a total of 436 matches, 542 hours of tennis, with 891 sets and 7,079 games played. The longest match took over three hours! The kitchen team sold over 36 kilos of bacon in the bacon rolls and around 200 jacket potatoes whilst the volunteers in the bar served around a thousand cups of tea and coffee!

Once again the organisers' thanks go to the members of Billericay LTC who gave up the use of their club for a week and put their backs to the wheel whenever it was required – we couldn't do it without them.

As always we are already planning next year's tournament and would welcome any ideas for improvement or indeed constructive criticism – please e-mail [richard\\_lehman@hotmail.com](mailto:richard_lehman@hotmail.com).