

THE BRENTWOOD SPORTS ESSEX OPEN TENNIS TOURNAMENT 2009

This was the 63rd time the Essex Open Tournament had been held and the sixth occasion that it has been hosted by Billericay Lawn Tennis Club. Once again its success was due in no small part to the enthusiastic agreement of the club's members and for their huge volunteer support in running the event.

The tournament is a Grade 3, LTA sanctioned event, which is open to all junior players and additionally has an Open section to cater for the Over 18's. The tournament attracted 213 players and 452 event applications with the majority of players coming from Essex but Kent, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, Suffolk, Surrey and a number of other county's were also represented.

Tournament Organisers Les Cambridge and Richard Lehman (the club's Chairman and Treasurer respectively) were absolutely delighted with how well the tournament was received with many parents and players commenting how well run it is. Indeed the referee's report to the LTA included the comment that 'It should be noted that the effort made by Billericay LTC and their members to facilitate this tournament was quite exceptional and far beyond what is usual for a tournament at this level'.

All tournaments need sponsors and we are lucky enough to have Brentwood Sports (www.brentwoodsports.co.uk) as our principal sponsor but a number of other local organisations together with some individual club members provided additional financial support.

Once again we employed a professional tennis referee, David Fuchs (www.tennisuk.net). David, in his normal calm and competent manner, led a team of independent LTA court supervisors and did an excellent job - we were delighted at the professional and highly efficient manner in which they all carried out their responsibilities. It was particularly pleasing to note that far fewer code violations were issued this year. We hope that the message is getting through to players that the Essex Open organisers will not tolerate unsportsmanlike behaviour.

The BBQ summer that had been predicted did not quite materialise and a number of days were affected by rain but despite this all 400 matches were completed with five finals taking place on the Friday and another seventeen on the Saturday. In fact the last finals match had just been completed when the heavens opened!

With all ten of Billericay's courts in use each day the club was buzzing and some exceptional tennis was witnessed. Whilst the tournament is principally for juniors (i.e. under 18's) the club also runs a Men's and Ladies Open Singles events which get more and more popular each year. Indeed 51 men entered this years Open Singles event.

Whilst the full results may be found elsewhere the U18 Boys and Girls events were won by Michael Suleau and Abi Claydon who beat Francis Sargeant and Faye Watts respectively. Faye merits a special mention having reached the final of all three events that she entered.

Billericay club players were successful in a number of events: Jamie Wright did exceptionally well in winning the U14 Boys Singles, Nicola Judge & Bronwen Perkins teamed up to win the U14 Girls Doubles and Nicola then went on to beat her partner in the U14 Girls Singles Plate Competition, James Bigland won the Men's Plate, Marcus Eatherton won the U16 Boys Doubles with Joseph Hall, and Vicky Simpson won the Women's Doubles partnered by Claire Dixey.

The club's grounds were in splendid condition under Dennis Gould's eagle eye and Martin Capper, the Bar Manager, spent numerous hours restocking the vending machines and bar! Indeed the club's kitchen and bar saw constant action throughout the tournament as the serving of over 500 bacon rolls and 1,000 cups of tea and coffee testifies - not to mention the huge number of hot meals, home grown salads, cakes and ice-creams that were sold! An excellent post tournament dinner was enjoyed by some 60 adults and children, on the Saturday evening, thanks to the catering skills of Club Captain Isabel Holmes who managed the kitchen superbly throughout the week. The recently resurfaced car park and the wonderful new picnic decking area were much commented on.

For those people who like statistics:

- There were 851 sets and 6,839 games played.
- The aggregate duration of matches was 506 hours and 2 minutes.
- The overall average match time was 1 hour 16.5 minutes though the average U14 Girls Doubles match took 2 hours and 6 minutes.

- The longest match was the Men's Open Singles Final between Alexander Hackett and Matthew Pearce which was won by Alexander 4-6, 6-4, 7-6(5) in 3 hours 12 minutes!
- We got through 42 kilos of bacon and
- 8 biro's went missing from the referee's desk!

During the week the club were pleased to entertain Elizabeth and John Scannell (major sponsors), Clive Rippon and John Tucker (ECLTA Secretary and President respectively) and John Baron, Billericay's MP, who held talks with a number of club officials regarding the club's ongoing desire for indoor courts.

Once again the organisers' thanks go to the members of Billericay LTC who give up their courts for a week every year and put their backs to the wheel whenever it is required - we couldn't do it without them.

The club and David Fuchs have already started work on 2010's competition and welcome ideas for improvement and constructive criticism - please e-mail info@billericayltc.co.uk.

RKL
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