**SWL Annual General Meeting - Senior League Report 2023-24**

For the third year we ran two competitions throughout the season – the Leagues and the Invitational Cup - together with Development and Indoor tournaments.

Initially with 8 teams entered into the League, we again ran two tiers – Premier and Division 1. Once again using the tournament structure and locating ourselves at Westonbirt School, each team was to play the others in its division three times during the course of 5 tournaments with matches of 10 minute quarters. Like all other areas of the game, our competitions were hit hard by the weather – our November tournament having to be cancelled the day before due to frozen pitches and our February tournament also cancelled at short notice due to waterlogged pitches, leaving only 3 tournaments having taken place. A replacement date was arranged in April at Odd Down Sports Ground in Bath and our thanks go to Bath Lacrosse and especially Nik Roberts for loan of equipment and for putting up and taking down protective Bownets.

The Premier division had a highly competition season with the results decided at the final fixture, ultimately won by Cheltenham on goal difference with Bristol Bombers second, Cirencester third and Birmingham fourth. Cheltenham will therefore take on the winners of SE Division 1 at National Club Finals on 26 May in the hope of retaining the Plate and bringing silverware back to the South West!

Unfortunately for Division 1, Nuneaton had known they would only be able to attend two tournaments – which were then cancelled due to the weather. However, we were delighted to welcome for the first time Cardiff Harlequins who have grown from strength to strength throughout the season. The rearranged tournament at Bath saw Bristol Bombers 2s and Harlequins battle it out for second – with only 1 point in it at the end. Final results were Bath first, Bristol Bombers 2s second and Harlequins third.

The Invitational Cup was this year structured with 10 teams in two groups, A and B, with a round-robin planned over five weekends followed by a Final/play-offs matches. Fixtures across the competition were badly hit both by the weather and by clubs unable to field teams. However, there were some very competitive matches, not least the Final with Bath taking on Cheltenham who ultimately retained the trophy! Other places were: 3rd Cirencester, 4th SMC, 5th Bristol, 6th Birmingham, 7th Cardiff Harlequins, 8th Oxford, 9th Southampton Ladies and 10th Cardiff.

The Development tournaments had 10 teams entered but were the most badly hit over the season with both original dates being cancelled due to the weather. Alternative dates were offered in March and May but unfortunately only Exeter Uni was able to attend in March so they were given longer games against Division 1 teams and due to exams and course work pressures they all struggled to put teams out for the May date so the fixture was cancelled.

And finally, we once again ran the very popular Indoor tournament in January. Returning to Prior Park College in Bath, 7 teams entered and battled it out on the day with some fun, dry and mud-free lacrosse! Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and Cheltenham came away eventual winners.

The size of the region continues to be our biggest challenge with getting players to commit to away fixtures problematic. On the whole though the opportunity of playing competitive lacrosse roughly twice a month, with the option to enter a variety of competitions, seems to continue to work well. This is an expensive format however with the hire of multiple pitches and the need to have at least one neutral umpire available at tournaments to fill gaps in the order of play when teams don’t attend.

Finally, having cajoled and corralled for 5 seasons it is time to step down! I send a huge thank you to all the clubs who have unfailingly stepped up to help out with running the fixtures and seem unfazed by last-minute reorganisation! Your support has been enormously appreciated and I really could not have done the job without it - please pass my thanks to your teammates and supporters. I know you will continue to give the same support to my successors!

Victoria Westwood

Senior League Admin

2 May 2024