Social Tennis Sub-Committee

# Briefing notes

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12/5/2024

## Introduction

At the committee meeting on it was agreed to form a sub-committee to make recommendations on how to improve social tennis. This document outlines the scope of the work the sub-committee will undertake. Ideally, preliminary results should be ready for the Management Meeting on 22 May. Ultimately new guidelines will be incorporated in the Members Handbook, which is due an update.

## Background

In the past, and in particular before Covid and the booking system was introduced, social tennis was attended by a good mix of players of different abilities. Social tennis is particularly important as a way for new members to be introduced to play at the club and meet members

There are now several issues, identified from the survey and from comments of members that need resolution:

* Some members attend sessions (particularly Wednesday evening) when their playing standard is not judged acceptable by other attending.
* During social tennis some members refuse to come off court after 1 set.
* Cliques form to the exclusion of weaker players
* Attendance at Saturday afternoon which 1 year ago was mostly full has dropped off. Last Saturday only 5 courts were in use, and it is mostly over by 4pm

Former social tennis players now prefer to organise their own session between 12 and 2pm on a Saturday

* Classes are not feeding players into social tennis on a Monday evening.

## Scope of work

### Define when social sessions should take place.

Currently the “official” social tennis sessions are:

* Monday evening for Improvers
* Wednesday evening for Intermediate / Advanced players
* Thursday morning for (mainly) men’s vets
* Friday morning – introduced so off-peak players have a social session available

For discussion:

* Introduce a daytime Ladies-only social session
* Promote the current Friday session
* Split Saturday into sessions for different abilities
* Allow off-peak players to join specific Saturday sessions

Define the playing standard that should be applied for each session.
Ollie has expressed a willingness to rate all club members who want to play social.

Discuss ways in which this could be practically achieved.

Define the playing format for each session to ensure timely swap around.
e.g. Full sets, fixed number of games, sudden death, tie break at 5-all etc.

### Define how playing fours should be selected.

Currently this is not well defined and the practice of putting in rackets and drawing a four at random is often adopted. While this works when all are of a similar standard, it is not suitable when playing standards are widely different.

Options to consider include:

* Management by a coach (only currently possible on Saturdays)
* Management by a committee member / regular player (needs keen volunteers)
* Pegboard system (See appendix for systems used at Pinner and Teddington)

## Other measures to encourage players to attend social tennis

* Should we reinstate Saturday afternoon tea?
* Hold regular bring your own barbecues as formerly done on Wednesdays? How often, which days.
* More American Tournaments?
* See also examples in the Reddit thread in the appendix.

## Appendices

### 2024 Survey results

Note: The documents below include topics other that social tennis.

* [Survey results, excluding comments](https://www.coombewoodltc.co.uk/documents/98/Survey_summary_2024.pdf)
* [Survey comments](https://www.coombewoodltc.co.uk/documents/99/Survey_comments_final_Feb_2024.pdf)
* [Survey recommendations](https://www.coombewoodltc.co.uk/documents/102/Survey_results_and_recommendations_2024.pdf)

### How Pinner LTC organise social tennis

* [Social Tennis | Pinner Lawn Tennis Club (pinnerltc.co.uk)](https://www.pinnerltc.co.uk/social-tennis)

### How Teddington LTC organise social tennis

The following description of a peg system is extracted from the Teddington LTC club manual.

**Peg System:**

Where there is a coach on duty, they will select balanced & varied fours to ensure that all present are treated fairly. A peg system operates when the board is not operated by a coach:

* At the beginning of the session, players put their names on the board in the ‘players waiting’ section, after any existing names.
* The first named player will choose three others from the following six names.
* The three players from the six who were not selected, shall have the right to play in the next four.  If this results in three players of one sex with one of the other, the ‘odd one out’ may decline to play in that four without losing their position on the board.
* One set shall be played up to a maximum of 12 games.  In the event of a 6-6 score, the pair winning the last game shall be deemed the winner.
* When the set is finished, the names of players will be replaced in the ‘players waiting’ section behind existing names, with the winning pairs first in alphabetical order, followed by the losing pair in reverse alphabetical order.
* If any player declines to play when selected, except as allowed in point 3 above, their name will be moved to the end of the waiting players.
* If all available courts are full and more than six people are waiting, fours should be selected as soon as possible and placed in the ‘arranged fours’ section in order to minimise waiting time.

A variation is used for midweek (off-peak) sessions:

***The peg system: at the beginning of the session players put the names on the board.  Once four players have arrived, they go on court. Subsequent players add their name to the board to show that they are waiting. When the set is finished the winners spin for whose name goes first and second on the board and the losers do likewise to see who goes third and fourth.  The player at the top of the board can choose three players from the next five players to make up a set.***

### [Reddit discussions on social tennis](https://www.reddit.com/r/10s/comments/16ih7ja/improving_social_play_at_tennis_club/)