

# Tennis Sussex News

JULY 2023



TENNIS SUSSEX

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## The Sussex hero who brought club back from brink of extinction named LTA National Volunteer of the Year

In 2019, Ifield tennis club had just eight members. The courts were in a state of disrepair; the club house was gloomy and it just wasn't the sort of place where people wanted to be. Just four years later, the venue has been utterly transformed. Not only does it have 60 dedicated members enjoying the newly spruced-up facilities, but it is a place where the joy of community, friendship and tennis combine on a daily basis. This month, the woman behind the club's revival was honoured for her extraordinary achievement.

Paula White, a part-time library worker from Crawley, came through the county,

regional and national stages to be named LTA National Volunteer of the Year. Paula was presented with her prestigious award by Sir

***“Our aim is to make Ifield Tennis Club a welcoming, inclusive club that will appeal to tennis enthusiasts of all ages and abilities and allow players to improve and thrive without pressure”***

Trevor McDonald on 4th July at the National Tennis Centre in Roehampton. She said: “I was so shocked when I was announced the winner. All the hard work and sleepless nights have been so worth it. But there is still much to do to bring tennis to more of our community and, as a club, we

WILL succeed and thrive.” Ifield TC, which has always been run by volunteers with a club committee, was first established in

the 1960s and thrived for many years. Paula and her family joined approximately fifteen years ago. But the club's membership gradually dwindled and by 2019 its future was in grave danger. “In early 2020 we met with our local LTA community development representative as we

needed help desperately,” explained Paula. “We had a club meeting and came up with an action plan which seemed at the time very



overwhelming! Then covid hit and all plans were put on hold. In January 2021, the LTA got in touch and asked how the action plan was going. To be honest, nothing had been done. So, with only 8 members, someone had to take the bull by the horns and that is what I did.” They created a new club logo, Facebook page and website via Clubspark which facilitated online membership, court booking, news and club information; they ditched the previous cheque-only bank account in favour of online banking; and they refurbished the

club house and tidied up the grounds. They also decided on a new club ethos. By the summer of 2021 it had 20 members. The next hurdle was the mammoth task of raising sufficient money to get the courts resurfaced. Hours of form-filling paid off and the club received funding from a number of sources, including the National Lottery, the local council, Gatwick Community Trust, Courage Dyer and Sussex Community Trust. The club also contributed £5000 of its own money. The resurfacing job cost £38,000 and was finally completed in April 2023 - in time for a glorious Open Day and celebration, with the Mayor of Crawley cutting the ribbon. Paula's son Ben, who has been her right-hand man throughout, said: “We are all so proud of the work she has put in to create a friendly and fun environment, the ethos she has instilled in the club has made it such a lovely place to be for absolutely anyone to come and be a part of.”

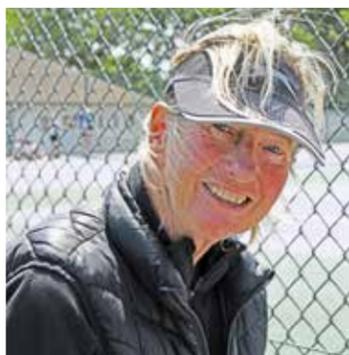


# Hundreds of schoolchildren experience the joy of competitive tennis thanks to inspirational Sussex teacher



Ex-international player Jane Nash knows more than most about the numerous benefits that competitive tennis can bring to children of all abilities. After competing at the highest levels as a junior, she has devoted much of her adult life to creating tennis-playing opportunities for school children who might otherwise never get the chance to give the sport a go. This Summer, over 1000 pupils from 15 schools across the county took part in a series of nine tournaments held for different age groups at Bede's School in Upper Dicker, near Hailsham, where Jane is now head of Prep School tennis. Participants spend an afternoon playing matches in a round robin format with the top teams progressing through to a knock-out stage. Jane, who has represented Sussex as both a junior and a senior player, said: "I put together these tournaments

about 15 years ago when I realised that I and other schools had many, many children taking part in their tennis programmes



but who were not able to take part in the LTA school events because they involve only four players in a team. I wanted to accommodate all of our other children who aren't necessarily top county players but who nevertheless are very keen to compete. "The tournaments are quick fire. The younger children play singles and doubles and the older children just play doubles as they seem to enjoy doubles more the older they get!

In terms of spectators, it is mainly just the children and their teachers so there is no pressure, just the pure enjoyment of the game." Lancing College pupil Ben Atkins, now aged 13, has been taking part in the annual events for the past five years. He said: "I really love going to Bede's to play with my school team. It is great missing academic lessons in order to play



tennis and we usually get given lemonade and a cookie too. The tennis is great fun because it is so fast-paced and we get to play lots of different matches against lots of different teams."



## Tennis Sussex President Chris Neighbour is a regular visitor to the schools events



The annual Sussex Schools Championships are special. Whereas our junior players may enter LTA tournaments or they may represent their club in competition, here they have the opportunity to represent their school. As teams arrive at Bede's School for the afternoon the atmosphere grows and, quite often, players will catch up with others who they know from tournaments elsewhere or county training between their warm-up sessions. Competition is keen: players are animated and committed, looking to win every point they can; when not playing themselves they can be seen standing courtside supporting fellow team members as they play their matches; and urgent conversations are regularly held to establish how the school is doing overall, sometimes whilst keeping fortified with splendid refreshments. It is not only the event trophy that is at stake; there is always the opportunity for an individual or team to be nominated for the day's Fairplay Awards. When they are not on court players are expected to keep, agree and report the scores from each match. Stand back and take stock and you realise that the seven courts are the stage for a really busy afternoon – as one match ends so the next group of players step forward – until two or three hours later the results are in and the all important presentations take place. Surely, there can be little doubt that these players will be looking back on the Sussex Schools Championships in years to come with happy memories and such pride that they were able to further develop their game and represent their school in a such a well-regarded, probably unique competition.



# Sussex players delight in Wimbledon magic



**Sussex stars Julian Cash and Sonay Kartal have once again experienced the delight of playing at Wimbledon.**

**Both players were the recipients of Wild Cards into this year's championships. Whilst Sonay competed in the ladies singles, Julian took part in both the men's doubles and the mixed doubles events.**

**Tough draws meant that both players went out after their first round matches, but they hope that next year will deliver another opportunity to play on the hallowed courts of SW19.**

**Julian said: "I am so grateful to the All England Club for giving me the opportunity to play at Wimbledon this year. It was a shame that my usual doubles partner, Henry Patten, was injured but it was great that Luke Johnson stepped in last minute to play with me and I really enjoyed my first taste of mixed doubles with Alicia Barnett. It is great to play in front of the Great British fans - the atmosphere at Wimbledon is always special."**

**Sonay's coach Ben Reeves said: "For me, Great British summer and Wimbledon go hand in hand and to now be a part of that and to create the memories that I have created with Sonay is a dream come true. The journey that Sonay and I have been on doesn't happen often and we are loving every part of it - player and coach learning and growing together".**



# Double victory for Sussex as both boys and girls teams triumph in 14U county cup

Sussex enjoyed an extraordinary weekend of success in the biggest team tennis event in the junior calendar. The 14U girls notched up wins against Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, and Hampshire & IOW to win their County Cup group, whilst the boys beat Dorset, Devon and Suffolk to go through to the national finals in Nottingham where their journey ended at the quarter final stage. Boys Captain Martin Reeves said: "I am sure this experience will stay with the players forever - the chance to spend quality time with your teammates both on and off the court and the opportunity to compete against the country's finest makes this such a unique event. A big thanks to Richard Law who did an outstanding job coaching the players and Jemma Turner who helped get the boys ready in the county sessions leading up to the event." Coco Mole, aged 13, from Pavilion and Avenue Tennis Club, said: "I was really proud of our team. It was great to be able to support each other and I really liked the

support that the team gave me during the singles. It got me through some tough points. We won as a team and every player mattered." Thomas Blakely, aged 14, who trains at Storrington, said: "It was the first time that I have taken part in County Cup and it was a brilliant experience. I loved being part of a team and it was great the way that the coaches came on court between sets to give you some tips and encouragement. There were lots of people watching which meant you felt a bit more pressure than usual, but the atmosphere was really good".



## County Performance Manager Keith Pullin pays tribute to his 14U teams' success



I am extremely pleased and proud of all the players and the County Captains for their incredible achievement. This was a very special weekend for the county and it was the dream start to the launch of the new LTA County Cup format. Both our girls and boys teams were grouped according to their collective rankings value which meant they were now competing against other counties with similar level teams. After the first day it looked like both our teams were definitely the underdogs to finish top of their groups, so for them to then go out and battle believing the way they did, and come out winning both groups with such close margins, after so many heroic moments, epic match tie breaks and numerous match points saved, was such an amazing result for everyone involved and a very special moment for the county. The buzz and excitement it created across Sussex was fantastic to see as all the players were being fully supported by their coaches, their clubs, their tennis friends and their schools throughout!

## Parks courts in Crawley celebrate new lease of life

Tennis in Crawley has become more accessible than ever thanks to a £270,000 cash boost. Nine parks courts in three different venues - Maidenbower, Southgate and West Green parks - have been resurfaced and repainted and provided with new fencing, nets and gate systems. Funded by the Government, LTA Tennis Foundation and local council, the

project is part of a nationwide programme of investment that is seeing thousands of existing park tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition brought back to life. Sussex coaching provider, Serious About Community Tennis, is now offering local residents free tennis sessions at the new courts in the hope of getting more people involved in the sport. Coach Rhys Hanger said:



"Myself, Grant Broadley and Luke Anderson who run SACT have been lucky to have tennis in our lives from a young age. We have worked in different environments from grass roots to high performance, international level tennis and we have seen how at every level the sport has such a positive impact on people's lives and their health. The funding has helped create an environment where people can have fun playing tennis, socialising and getting fit." For more information visit <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/Crawley>



## Tennis leadership course opened up to parents

Parents are being offered the chance to take part in a popular course that will help them to deliver tennis to their children. The Tennis Leaders Course, which equips participants with leadership skills in tennis, has traditionally attracted players and coaches. But Holbrook Club coach and course provider Mike Costa hopes to encourage more parents to sign up for the course too. He said: "The course will be really useful to adults who are interested in volunteering occasionally to help run an event at a club, or to lead a practice session for social players or to assist the coaching team in a group lesson. The dynamic in small group discussion involving

club juniors from diverse backgrounds, school/college players and parents is fantastic as it brings together a diversity of interesting viewpoints. Jemima Lee, LTA Participation Development Manger, said: "It is fantastic to see that Mike has been able to open up this excellent course to parents as we know how they play a crucial part in the development of children as well as being an invaluable support to coaches and clubs, helping to make sure tennis is relevant, accessible, rewarding and enjoyable."

The next courses will take place at the Holbrook Club in Horsham on 21st and 23rd September 2023. Email [sukimike61@gmail.com](mailto:sukimike61@gmail.com) for more information.

# The unique talent of Sussex performance coach Ben Reeves has made him a national finalist in this year's LTA Awards. Here the 36-year-old dad-of-two reflects on his journey so far



From the minute I could walk, I had a bat and ball in my hand. Tennis has always been a big part of our family. My dad and uncle Martin were my coaches, with my mum running me here, there, and everywhere for training and tournaments. I played to national level as a junior, but I found training quite challenging and could get very emotional when competing. At 16, I decided to stick to representing Sussex at county level and playing for the club's first team. I also began playing semi-professional football but had to stop a couple of years later when I broke my foot and ankle badly. I did scaffolding for a bit and was doing a boring desk job for an energy company at the age of 19 when my good friend Richard Law telephoned and offered me a coaching job. The rest is history! I worked at Withdean and Southdown tennis clubs for the next two or three years before finding my permanent home at Pavilion and Avenue where I continue to base myself today.

I feel extremely honoured to have played a part in the journey of so many players, from red ballers taking their first steps on court to players competing in national and international events. I've been lucky to have coached British champions, European champions and international junior and senior champions. My biggest dream as a coach was to do all four grand slams and I've now achieved this. For me, understanding the individual player is key. You can start to unlock everything once you know what makes them tick. I teach feelings and understanding and adopt a "fail and fix" method. In tennis you will make errors. It's how you speak to yourself after and how you correct these errors and problem-solve in real time that matters. I try to stay away from an autocratic style as much as possible. I feel that I'm a fun, firm but fair coach who teaches the person over the sport. I definitely go off an advanced knowledge of the basics rather than a basic knowledge of the advanced method, adding in the spicy bits when it's necessary. Being a tennis coach is extremely demanding, with early mornings, late nights and I now have a lot of travel too. It's a lifestyle choice for me not a job. But getting the work life balance right is

**Ben's Uncle - Tennis Sussex coach Martin Reeves - has been one of Ben's greatest inspirations. He said...**



I am delighted to see Ben achieve this much-deserved recognition for his coaching. I can remember him starting out on his coaching journey, passionate, creative and always possessing a natural eye to see what areas needed to be developed to maximise the individual's potential. His player management is second to none in the respect that he really cares for his players, runs the extra mile for them and is in their corner in the heat of the battle. All these qualities have come to fruition in the coaching he has done with Sonay. Onwards and Upwards!

still something I'm working on. The time sacrifice made by those who coach professional athletes is huge - not only for themselves but also for their families. There is no simple way in to professional tennis and there is no path. Every journey is different. But putting in the work and being consistent with it is key and will be something every professional has in common - "outwork your potential", as they say! Recent highs have included seeing Sonay beat a former Australian Open grand slam champion, Sofia Kenin, and a top 50 player, Ruse, and go on to qualify for Nottingham. Having those

back-to-back wins was a huge moment for us both thinking "yep, this is the level I want to be playing every week and it's possible," although with those massive highs come huge lows when you lose. But this is just the start of the journey for Sonay. There will be many more great times to come. I'm just trying to enjoy every moment as much as I can and not dive too deep into the future, just focusing on each little part and do it to the best of my ability. I am so grateful to my mum and dad, to Martin, who continues to be my biggest role model in tennis, and to Julie Hobbs and her family for believing in me."



**... and a few words from proud mum, Tracey Wheeler**

*Ben has always been so in love with tennis. When he was a little toddler he was never seen without a racket in his hand. In fact, his first word was "ball!"*



*His love of tennis stemmed from watching his uncle, Martin Reeves, play, as well as all the hours spent on the court with the juniors at Pavilion and Avenue tennis club, supported also by his dad, Steve, and his devoted Nan, Sandra. We would spend every day at Pav and Ave. It was his special place, a second home. I see everyday how passionate and dedicated Ben is about his players, and his love of the game truly shines. He is also very humble about his achievements, and would much rather spend time talking about his players. He is also an amazing dad to his two children, a loving partner to Chloe, and a loyal friend, brother, and grandson. To say I am the proudest mum is an understatement. And I must thank everyone who has supported Ben along his journey. He recently posted a video on his Instagram whilst on tour in Australia with Sonay Kartal, and he chose the song "This is my heaven". I know that it truly is his heaven. It made me cry. It has been such a joy to watch my son achieve his dreams. Well done Ben. My superstar! I am your super proud mumma!*

## International star Sonay Kartal pays tribute to her award-winning coach...



I've known Ben as long as I've been coached by him - 15 years. He's been with me through it all - highs and lows on and off the court and in my personal life. His ability to turn up to training every day with a smile on his face and bring a happy mood is an incredible skill and shows you just how devoted he is to his job! You would never know if he's having a bad day. It's no surprise to me that he is being nominated for coach of the year. He has all the skills, communication, personality and so much knowledge on all levels of tennis right from beginners to professional. When you work with Ben you know he's gonna give you his best every time; he's gonna push you in the direction of your goals no matter what it is - it could be winning a grand slam or finding a chopper grip - he'll help. He's taken my game from an 8 year-old red baller to a professional making a living playing on the WTA tour! Pretty amazing Thank you Ben!

# New LTA initiative to boost female participation in tennis shows early signs of success in Sussex

Whether it is the chocolate brownies and regular chat breaks or the fun inclusive drills, the LTA's Youth Prime Girls initiative is already bringing results for two Sussex clubs. Coach Tess Bass from Preston LTC and Steyning's Julia Searle are among the few coaches in the country accredited to deliver the course that hopes to attract and retain more girls in tennis. Tess's first six-week introduction course for girls aged five to nine attracted 29 young female players and many of them enjoyed it so much that they are currently signed up to a seven-week Follow On course. They also enjoyed a special Team Challenge and

Tennis Festival event on 21st June, which included water balloons and fun tennis games followed by pizza and chocolate brownies. Tess, who reached the regional finals of this year's LTA Awards in recognition of her work at Preston, said: "As a female coach it's really important to me to promote and retain girls in tennis. This is a fab initiative and I had to be part of it! When it was launched in November 2022 I knew that this was perfect for me and my coaching ethos. I have several girls-only sessions at Preston for ages 10- plus but I was lacking girls age 5-plus. I hoped this initiative would help me spread the love of tennis to a younger audience. However, the hard work

begins now as I have to keep these girls playing tennis with me and get them back on court in September. I am working on a plan. It's all about forward planning and I hope that I can keep



the momentum going!" The course is soon to reach the east side of the county with Le Tennis's Holly Bennett one of the latest Sussex coaches to successfully apply to be trained to deliver the course. The 26-year-old Level 3 coach said: "As soon as I



saw this LTA initiative being advertised, I thought it would be a great opportunity, so I sent through an application which involved answering a list of questions and sending through a video of why I would like to be part of this and why I would be

a good fit for it. I was very interested in being involved with this initiative because I love the sport and being a young female tennis player myself, I know the struggles and barriers girls face when it comes to playing and competing in sport."

**Head coach Julia Searle reflects on her involvement in the Prime initiative and says that it is already making a difference at Steyning Tennis Club**



Growing up as a girl in tennis, I made really strong friendships with the girls that I trained with, although I often wished that there were more girls playing in my club. Throughout my coaching career, I've always paid close attention to the number of girls within our clubs. When Prime Video launched this initiative, it was the perfect opportunity to give myself a push to introduce girls-only groups to our programme at Steyning Tennis Club. I guess I want to be part of this experiment to see if girls-only groups mean that more girls at Steyning Tennis Club will (a) start playing tennis, (b) enjoy playing tennis, and (c) continue to stay in tennis.

We began our "Girls Night" at the club towards the end of April, and so far we have had around twenty girls aged 6-9 who are new to tennis involved. We've also had some girls who were previously in mixed groups on other days switch to the girls groups either because they prefer the environment or because they'd like to attend with their friends. In our girls sessions, the players work extremely hard to improve their skills and are picking up the game quickly. I've also noticed how supportive the girls are of each other - if one of the girls is finding an activity difficult, their partner or their group will always offer help and encouragement which is wonderful to see. I also have three Tennis Leaders who work alongside me, Amos Misra, Sophie Hibbert and Sammy Tidley. These three are fantastic leaders and provide great role models for the young girls at the club. I coach as part of Matthews Tennis Coaching, which provides the coaching programme at several clubs in West Sussex. We're extremely fortunate that we have several fantastic female coaches within our group and, alongside our female tennis leaders, are very well placed to inspire the next generation of girls in tennis.



## Amanda flies flag for GB at international disability event

Sussex disability tennis star Amanda Chalmers won a silver medal in this year's World Transplant Games in Australia. The courageous young player, who had a life-saving double lung transplant in 2012, was a member of Team Great Britain and Northern Ireland's victorious side which topped the medals table. The Games took place in Perth from 15-22 April and saw over 2,500 transplant recipients, live donors, donor families and supporters travel to Australia from all over the world to compete, support, and raise awareness of the lifesaving benefits of organ donation. Amanda, who was born

with cystic fibrosis, said: "The Games is an amazing event, and an honour to be able to compete in. To be with so many other people who are all here due to receiving the gift of life is really inspiring, everyone has suffered in one way or another and worked hard

to compete in the Games. I am extremely grateful to my donors and all their families for allowing me to be here today, with the health that I have. I am forever grateful to them for the life I am able to live, and will always live it to the full."





## Sussex tennis heroes honoured



Coach of the Year category in recognition for his work with Sonay Kartal and other top players. All finalists were invited to a moving ceremony at the National Tennis Centre on 4th July 2023. Barry Fulcher said: "It was a really well done event. It was amazing to see all the individuals and communities around the country who invest so much time and effort in the sport from grassroots to the peak levels of the game". Ben Reeves said: "I feel overwhelmed. I never thought I would reach this stage. Seeing the names of the coaches in previous rounds. I'm truly grateful to be in the mix with the highest level of coaching this country has to offer. There are some extremely experienced coaches on that list who I very much look up to. To reach top 3 is truly a wow moment."

The achievements of some of the most incredible members of the Sussex tennis community were celebrated at this year's national LTA Awards. Crawley's Paula White was crowned National Volunteer of the Year after

bringing back Ifield TC from the brink of extinction; Barry Fulcher, who runs the Training Base in Falmer and who is founder and director of the Progress Tour, was runner-up for the President's Award; and Ben Reeves was runner-up in the Performance



## Brighton club threatened with closure needs your help



One of Sussex's oldest tennis clubs is facing closure after its landlord served it with an eviction notice in order to build luxury housing on the four-court site. Badgers Tennis Club in Brighton's Kemp Town has more than 230 members and is one of the most treasured leisure facilities in the local area. The club is calling on members of the Tennis Sussex community to sign a petition which hopes to persuade the multi-millionaire landlords to rethink their plans for the site.

## Tennis Sussex Chair Martin Carpenter is humbled by the contribution made by the county's many tennis volunteers



One of the striking things I keep finding in my visits to clubs across Sussex is the huge number of people who put so much of their time and commitment into these local facilities to make them better for all. It's a humbling experience to witness and shows just what community spirit can do. I hesitate to pick out any individual club or group but I would like to mention two. The first is Ifield TC in Crawley on which there and there is a special feature in this newsletter. It's quite a story and in May I was fortunate to be able to attend the club's re-opening from the brink of closure. What I saw what quite a revelation. Paula White and many others are to be congratulated by what they have achieved for the Ifield community. The second is the Crew Club in the Whitehawk area of Brighton. I recently took up the offer to join a coaching session of local children after school time. The enthusiasm of the coaching team to engage with the youngsters was impressive and heart-warming. Reaching out and widening the sports offer to areas where it is not obvious is such a valuable and rewarding exercise for all. I'm delighted that Tennis Sussex support the Crew Club and will continue to do so. On a similar theme, and as part of Volunteers Week, we recently invited clubs to put forward persons who make a particular contribution. Again, the response demonstrated how many people spend much time supporting and improving local facilities. Whilst some tasks can appear thankless, the rewards include the friendships that are created and access to the well-being of active sports. For my part I am very much enjoying seeing the benefits of the game in its widest sense.

## More ITF success for Sussex pro Dan Little

Top Sussex player Dan Little and his doubles partner Mark Whitehouse have clinched their second ITF doubles title together. The British duo triumphed at the prestigious event in Nottingham in May after defeating the number four seeds August Holmgren and Alfredo Perez in a nail-biting final that ended with a 12-10 championship tiebreak victory. The 26-year-old star from Shoreham-by-Sea hopes that 2023 will continue to see him making his mark on the international stage. "It's been a mixed summer for me so far," he said. "But I'm just hoping to keep on climbing up the rankings."



# Sussex junior Mateusz Tompsett 13, shares his experience of mingling with the stars at the Rothesay International at Eastbourne



Wishing all of our readers a joyous summer of tennis



**I am lucky to live in Eastbourne where the Eastbourne Rothesay International took place in June. I have attended many times before but I always enjoy seeing tennis players in action so close to home. I went to the tournament with my mum and, as my school had inset days, I did not miss lessons.**

**It was a WTA 500 and ATP 250 tournament so I met many famous players. They were all very friendly, signing autographs and tennis balls. The atmosphere was fantastic, buzzing, people were happy to be there. The weather was hot and sunny.**

**I watched many matches but probably my favourite was Liam Broady/Jonny O'Mara against Julian Cash/Luke Johnson in the men's doubles. I loved the fast pace of the matches and the players' interaction. Watching the women's final was also great as the final set was so close. Meeting Taylor Fritz, Coco Gauff and Katie Boulter were just a few names to mention.**

Putting together the latest edition of Tennis Sussex News has been a wonderfully uplifting experience. As a county, we have had so much to celebrate over the past few months. Our top junior and senior players have done us proud on the local, county, regional, national and international stages. It was sheer joy to watch home-grown Sussex talents Sonay Kartal and Julian Cash in action at Wimbledon last week and humbling to learn about the incredible medical journey of Amanda Chalmers who fought back from the brink of death to represent her country at tennis. We have also seen the incredible work of some of our coaches and volunteers honoured through the LTA awards and there are without doubt many more unsung heroes out there whose contributions enrich our lives on a daily basis. The extraordinary revival of Ifield Tennis Club is a demonstration of just how much can be achieved when like-minded members of our tennis community work towards the common goal of bringing the joy of tennis to as many people as possible.



AMANDA ATKINS  
EDITOR



# Former tennis international and top Sussex physio Khee Yen Wee unveils the secrets to Injury Prevention and Equipment Selection

*As tennis enthusiasts, we all strive for peak performance on the court while safeguarding ourselves from potential injuries. One important but often overlooked area of injury prevention in tennis is choosing equipment that is suitable for you. Here, we explore the technical aspects of tennis equipment such as rackets, strings, shoes, joint support, and taping to understand how they can effectively reduce the risk of injury.*



**T**he weight of a tennis racket is a critical factor that can impact your performance, technique and risk of injury. It should be chosen based on your strength and physical capabilities. For players with greater strength and power, a heavier racket (above 320 grammes) can provide additional stability and control by absorbing more energy from the ball. On the other hand, players with less strength may benefit from using a lighter racket (below 300 grammes) as it is easier to swing and manoeuvre, allowing for faster racket head speed.

Your technique and endurance should also be taken into consideration. A heavier racket requires more physical effort to swing so players with less strength or endurance may experience quicker fatigue. This can lead to a decline in technique and may increase your risk of injuries due to the inability to maintain proper form throughout a match.

Ultimately, the weight of a tennis racket should be a personal preference based on strength, playing style and physical capabilities. It is important to try different racket weights and seek

guidance from coaches to find the optimal weight that allows for a balance between control, power and comfort without putting excessive strain on your arm. Specific conditioning exercises and drills can also contribute to better endurance and technique respectively so players can handle heavier rackets more effectively if desired.

Additionally, the balance of the racket is crucial. Most rackets fall into three categories: head-heavy, head-light, or evenly balanced. A head-heavy racket can provide more power but may increase the risk of wrist and shoulder injuries, while a head-light racket offers greater manoeuvrability but may require more effort to generate power. An evenly balanced racket can provide a compromise between power and control. Try different balance points to find the best one that suits your playing style.

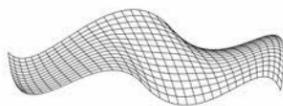


that may be made of gel or foam to alleviate pressure and enhance comfort during play. By absorbing the forces generated during running, jumping, and lateral movements, it reduces excessive impact on the joints in the foot and the chances of incurring stress-related injuries.

It is worth noting that the British Chiropractic and Podiatry Association (BCPA) recommends replacing tennis shoes every 45 to 60 hours of play or every six months, as the cushioning and support gradually diminish with use. Worn-out shoes can increase the risk of foot and lower limb injuries due to reduced stability and impact absorption.

**B**y making informed choices based on technical considerations and expert recommendations, you can enjoy the game while prioritising your well-being. However, remember that while choosing the right tennis equipment and products is crucial for injury prevention, proper technique and regular conditioning exercises also play vital roles in minimising the risk of injuries on the tennis court. Engaging in a comprehensive fitness programme which includes specific strengthening and mobility exercises for tennis will enhance your overall performance and reduce the likelihood of injuries.

**T**ennis strings play a significant role in the feel, power, and control of shots. Higher string tension provides more control but can increase the impact on the arm, potentially leading to arm and shoulder injuries. Conversely, lower string tension offers more power but may compromise control. Experimenting with different string tensions



will help you determine the optimal balance between power and control.

The choice of string material can also affect the overall performance and potential risk of injury. Natural gut strings are known for their excellent feel and comfort, offering more power with less shock to the arm. However, they tend to be less durable compared to synthetic

strings. Synthetic strings such as polyester, provide better durability and control but may transmit more shock to the arm. Hybrid string setups, which combine different string materials and tensions, can offer a balance of performance and comfort.

**T**ennis is a game of quick stops and starts, short sprints and frequent lateral movement – this is why it is important to have footwear that can endure the demands of the sport. Tennis shoes are specifically designed to provide support, stability and grip on the court, reducing the risk of ankle sprains and foot injuries.

For individuals with over-flexible feet or excessive pronation (flat arches), shoes with additional stability are necessary. “Motion control shoes” or a built-in arch support feature a firm midsole and limit excessive inward movement. This helps to distribute the forces more evenly throughout the foot.

On the other hand, if you have rigid or high-arched feet you will require shoes that offer flexibility to compensate for the reduced mobility and lack of natural shock absorption. Look for tennis shoes with ample cushioning in the midsole



**If you are suffering from any injuries or have questions about injury prevention, rehabilitation or fitness, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our physiotherapist, chiropractors, podiatrist or massage therapists at Sundial Clinics as we would love to listen and help. To make an online booking, go to <https://sundialclinics.co.uk/online-booking/> or give us a call at 01273 774 114.**

When a stroke marked the end of Sussex octogenarian *Mark Dury's* tennis-playing days, he decided to turn his hand to writing poetry and raising money for charity in the process. Here is one of Mark's poem's about our favourite sport...

## TENNIS

At King Henry's court in times long past,  
At real tennis the courtiers would be aghast,  
If by chance any but the monarch should be seen to win,  
For to beat him might prove a fatal and a mortal sin.

Now called "lawn tennis," one of the popular sports,  
'Tis played by folk of all different sorts,  
On varying surfaces, - all weather, clay or grass,  
The opponent, through wile or sheer power, to pass.

From just racquet and ball against a wall,  
There's something there to suit us all:-  
As spectator, strawberries and cream to be savoured in the sun,  
Or a major international "Grand Slam" with big money to be won.

Grace and muscle, brute force and wit,  
Subtlety and foresight, a thousand different ways a bouncy ball to hit,  
Fast or slow, lobbed, or screaming down a line,  
Caressed to fall gently just over the net, unreachable, so fine.

Curve left, curve right, hit low or high,  
Forehand, backhand, smash, - anything to break that tie,  
Use the wind to hold the ball, kiss the line, then break away,  
Subtly reel in the opposition, just like a fish to play.

Body line or wide outside, to serve is not just speed, but how you place,  
Especially, if you are to serve an ace.  
Excitement builds, a double fault, now it's deuce, then match point at last,  
Slice, topspin, just how to win, the choice is vast.



**To read more of Mark's poems and to raise money for his chosen charities, please visit [www.simplymypoeems.co.uk](http://www.simplymypoeems.co.uk)**