

**NORTH HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE 2016-2017**

The weather has been kind to hockey this season and all league matches have been completed.

Finding and allocating umpires for North Leagues is becoming more difficult each season and I'm sure the umpires report will confirm this. We appreciate all that the umpires committee, and in particularly Annette Badger, do to try and cover as many matches as possible.

The dates for the 2017-2018 season will be September 23rd to December 9th, then January 13 to March 17. with slight differences in Women Division 2 North East to allow for only 10 teams.

MENS HOCKEY

Congratulations go to Leeds HC on finishing the season as Premier Division champions and therefore gaining promotion to the North Conference of the MHL. Oxton's relegation from the MHL meant that both Ben Rhydding and City of York were relegated from the Premier Division, with Didsbury Northern and Durham University 2 replacing them having won promotion from Division 1. Liverpool University and Alderley Edge 2 were relegated from Division 1 and were replaced by Stockton and Wilmslow, the winners of Division 2 East and West respectively.

With Oxton relegated from the MHL this season, the NHML promotion and relegation rules meant that there was no automatic promotion place available for the winner of the Division 2 play-off. Leeds 2 and Crewe Vagrants met at Ben Rhydding, with Leeds 2 winning and going on to play Lancaster & Morecambe the following weekend. Again Leeds 2 was successful and are therefore promoted to Division 1 next season. Both games were rather one sided this year, with Leeds 2 winning 11-0 and 11-1. The NHL rules require at least 2 teams are relegated from Divisions 2 East and West, whatever happens above. This meant that Huddersfield Dragons and Morpeth were relegated from Division 2 East and Colwyn Bay and Winnington Park relegated from Division 2 West. With the 3 teams coming down from Division 1 all dropping into Division 2 West, it meant that City of Manchester, the team finishing 3rd from bottom in Div 2 West, was also relegated in order to provide a place for Liverpool Sefton, the NWHL champions. In addition, Bebbington, who finished 4th from bottom of Div 2 West played off with Urmston, runners up in the NWHL, with Urmston winning 6-4 and clinching the final place in Div 2 West. This meant that 4 teams were relegated from Division 2 West. The situation in Division 2 East was equally unusual, as with 2 teams promoted and none coming down from Division 1, there were 4 places to be filled. Brigg, Leeds 3, Marton Furness and Stokesley have filled those places.

WOMENS HOCKEY

We congratulate Fylde Hockey club on their promotion back to North Conference after their brief stay in our Premier division. Not wanting to be unfriendly, we hope we will not see them back again! University of Leeds step up into the Premier division together with Alderley Edge.

Alderley Edge and Leeds Adel gained promotion to Division 1 in last season play offs both had a good season there particularly Alderley Edge who continue their progress with promotion to the Premier division. Clubs in Division 1 will be joined by Pendle Forest, after many attempts, and Morpeth, from Division 2 North East.

We welcome Marton Furness, Triton from Cheshire, Manchester University, Fylde 2s, Northern 1, and Thirsk and Lindum and into Divisions 2.

Having had a successful first year sending results direct to Fixtures Live we are looking to move to On line registration as the Men's league does.

INDOOR

The North region qualifying rounds were held in Elland in December with Durham University Women and Deeside Ramblers men going on to the next round. Both sessions were well supported by umpires and technical officials appointed by the NHUA who were in turn managed, coached and assessed by others.

RULES

There have been some changes to the NHWL rules. Rule 13 regarding registrations has been amended as the result of an appeal brought by a club. The men's method of 'on-line' registration prevents many possible problems that could occur with registration and the women's league is looking to use the same method. In this case we will amend rule 13 again along the lines of the Mens rule 13, Appendix 1 and ensure that all clubs have that before the season starts. All clubs will be reminded to look carefully at the changes – along with all the other rules.

Rules seem to be much the largest part of our deliberations. We do try to make them easy to follow but don't seem able to achieve that.

COMPETITIONS

North Womens Competitions

U21 TOURNAMENT **WINNERS** Lancashire Central **RUNNERS UP** Lancashire

Cheshire dropped out on the Friday beforehand making it necessary to reschedule so we all played the same amount of hockey. It is dubious as to whether we will see Cheshire at any future events so the validity of this tournament is now brought into question.

Both Lancashire and Lanc's Central beat Cumbria so the winner had to come from Lancs v Lancs Central. This was a superb, if nail biting, game to watch with both teams playing outstanding hockey. Both teams had opportunities to score but good goalkeeping kept the game level until near the end when Lancs. Central scored. UCLAN is a good venue for this tournament and the umpires were well organised by Annette Badger.

COCK OF THE NORTH

There were 6 county entries for the Cock o' the North tournament held in late May and Yorkshire finished off the perfect weekend at Wakefield beating Cheshire 4-0 and Cumbria 4-1 for a perfect five wins out of five to retain the North Women's County Championship.

NORTHERN COUNTIES CHAMPIONSHIP 2017

The tournament was held over the weekend of May 20/21 at Wakefield Hockey Centre. Angie Clay organised the pitches and fixtures so many thanks to her and lots of thanks to Andy Pettigrew for all the work he did to ensure everything ran smoothly. Annette Badger organised the umpires with her usual efficiency and presented the trophy to the winning County.

Six Counties took part Cumbria, Cheshire, Durham, Isle of Man, Lancashire and Yorkshire. It soon became obvious that Lancashire and Yorkshire were the teams to beat. They met each other towards the end of the first day and provided a keenly contested game with a high level of skill. Yorkshire came out the winners by one goal the final score being 4-3.

Neither of these teams lost another match and both scored over 20 goals. Both sets of players were a real credit to their Counties. The Isle of Man had their most successful tournament ever gaining third place with 7 points. Cheshire gained 4 points and Cumbria and Durham 3 each.

With hindsight we need to put Yorkshire v Lancashire on as the last game and try to ensure no team plays three games consecutively. However the tournament was enjoyed and it is good to see players getting on well off the pitch!

The proposed dates for next season are –

U21 quadrangular October 22 in Lancashire

Northern Counties U21 tournament November 19 at UCLAN

Cock of the North tournament May 19/20 2018

If anyone can see any problems with these dates or has any suggestions regarding the events please contact me as soon as possible. Thank you.

Finally I would like to thank Anne Bryant for all the help and support she has given me over the years. It has been so reassuring to have a friendly, helpful person on the end of the phone.

Ann Edwards North Ladies Events organiser.

Our thanks go to Ann Edwards for organising both these events.

Alderley Edge and Lancaster met in the semi finals of the EH Women's trophy and Alderley Edge went into the final on April 30th against University of Nottingham, drew 4-4 then were very unfortunate to lose 4-3 in a shoot out. Timperley made it to the final of the Over 35s trophy but went out to Harleston Magpies. Chester Ladies made it to the semi finals of the O40s Cup losing 3-1 to Redland and Driffield made the final of the O45s plate, drew 1-1, then lost out on penalties.

We congratulate all those North teams that entered the EH events. They might not have come away with trophies but they put the North's name well to the front. Well done and thank you.

Mens

The "Pool" games for the Men's Senior County Championships were held over the weekend of 6/7 May, with semi-finals and finals played on 21 May at Nottingham. Yorkshire and Durham competed in the A Division pool hosted by Yorkshire at Abbeydale, with Yorkshire progressing to the A Division semi-finals on 20 May. Yorkshire beat Somerset 7-0 in the semi-final, and went on to retain their County Championship title by defeating Kent 8-4 in the final, their third national title in four years.

Northumberland competed in the B Division pool at Nottingham, whilst Cumbria and Isle of Man competed in the C Division pool in Portsmouth, with Isle of Man winning all 6 games and gaining promotion to Division B next season. Sadly, once again, neither Cheshire nor Lancashire played in the competition this year.

MASTERS HOCKEY

Attention in Masters hockey is currently focused on the EH Regional Tournaments which will be taking place over the next 2 months or so. The North will be hosting 4 out of the 12 tournaments (the most ever, thanks to the great support from clubs and NHUA who help us bid for these events very competitively against more southerly hosts):

- Men's O-45 Wakefield 6-7 May
- Men's O-50 Weetwood (Leeds) 3-4 June
- Men's O-70 Sheffield 3-4 June
- Women's O-55 Bowdon 10-11 June

A notable feature this year has been that we now have a systematic programme of get-togethers, coaching and selection in place for all age groups (previously the Ladies and O-60 men have been well-organised but the U-60 teams have each done their own thing). Bill Barton has organised approx monthly get-togethers for the 40-59 age group and the coaches involved have been active in bringing through candidates for selection for North teams. Bill has also been successful in securing sponsorship which will enable all the U-60 teams to be newly equipped with full playing kit, with heavily subsidised kit being available to all other participants.

Results for the full programme of regional tournaments will be posted on the North web site once available.

The North will also be well represented in the masters' home internationals and European championships taking place over the summer. *Tony Taig*

I am now resigning as chair of the North Competitions committee.

Throughout my time I have been privileged to be part of a group that has always taken a broad view of hockey; how they might improve it for all clubs in the North; improve promotion opportunities for clubs; clarify rules; re define those when clubs found new ways of circumventing them and always striving to help clubs and people to enjoy their hockey.

We have moved much closer to getting one set of rules and maybe administration methods for the mens and womens leagues. That has been through both leagues really working well together. No takeover, but through well discussed, considered and then combined agreements.

Thank you to all those who have been and are part of the group. Thank you for all your time, efforts, considerations, advice and support, countless emails and telephone calls. Peter Cocker as secretary bears the brunt of all that we do as he tries to make sense of all our thoughts, ideas and decisions – and he does that wonderfully without bias or complaining.

Thank you Peter and all the committee. It's been fun!

Anne Bryant