

## **NORTH HOCKEY ASSOCIATION**

### **COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE 2015-2016**

Matches are now completed for this season. The season has not been without its hiccups which started with flooded pitches in November and continued with snow, frost, wind and 'extreme' weather over the start of the New Year. This led to a back up of postponed games for some teams but eventually all were played. We did have to resort eventually to 'play it or concede it' with one women's team.

We are indebted to NHUA for the large amount of time and effort they have put in to provide umpires for the Leagues. Umpires have 'doubled up' many times throughout the season. We appreciate the work of the selection panel, and in particular Annette Badger, for all the work and constant amendments they have to do each week.

#### **MENS HOCKEY**

Congratulations go to Brooklands MU2 on finishing the season as Premier Division champions, to Ben Rhydding and Chester on gaining promotion to the Premier Division and Chapelton and Alderley Edge 2 on gaining promotion to the Division 1. As Brooklands MU2 cannot be promoted to the EHL, this means that Oxton 1 is promoted to the EHL as the highest placed "eligible" team. With Wakefield relegated from the National League 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. Liverpool University and Stockton met at Weetwood, with Liverpool University winning and going on to play Sheffield Hallam 2 the following weekend. Again Liverpool University was successful and were therefore promoted to Division 1 next season. Both games were very competitive and both were decided on penalty strokes. With the NHL rules requiring at least 2 teams are relegated from Divisions 2 East and West, whatever happens above, Liverpool University's success created a vacancy in Division 2 West. This vacancy has been filled by Colwyn Bay, who finished in third place in the NWHL. With Sheffield Hallam 2 relegated into Division 2 East however, 3 teams were relegated from that division. Sadly the league had to relegate a club for playing a player banned under the yellow card rule under a false name.

The "Pool" games for the Men's Senior County Championships were held over the weekend of 7/8 May, with semi-finals and finals played on 21 May at Cannock. Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham all competed in the A Division pool hosted by Yorkshire at Abbeydale, with Yorkshire and Durham progressing to the A Division semi-finals on 21 May. Northumberland finished bottom of the pool and are relegated to the B Division. Durham lost to Kent and Yorkshire beat Sussex in the semi-finals, with Yorkshire going on to retain their County Championship title by defeating Kent in the final.

Both Cumbria and Isle of Man competed in the C Division pool in Leicester over the weekend on to Swindon and Portsmouth respectively. Sadly, neither Cheshire or Lancashire played in the competition this year.

#### **WOMENS HOCKEY**

We congratulate Timperley on their promotion to the North conference League and welcome back Springfields (now to be known as Fylde) and Whitley Bay and Tynemouth back into our Premier division. Wakefield join them from Division 1.

Ben Rhydding and Lymm who gained promotion into division 1 at the end of last season have maintained their place. Congratulations to those clubs and their players.

The play offs for the top teams in the 4 Division 2s went well and there was some excellent hockey to watch in those matches. The final weekend proved a cliff hanger with both games continuing to be competed for until the very last minute of playing time in front of vociferous supporters. Alderley Edge and Leeds Adel are promoted to Division 1. Once again we thank NHUA for providing experienced and very efficient umpires for those games.

Full details are on the NHA web site

#### **INDOOR**

The Regional Qualifying rounds were held in December in Halifax and Bradford with Liverpool Sefton women and Preston men progressing to the next round.

## **RULES**

We look frequently and often at the rules, usually in an effort to clarify things and make it easier for players to play and enjoy their hockey and clubs to manage that for them. Sometimes we have to amend rules when we learn that some clubs or players have found a new way of circumventing them.

As ever there have been some problems caused by clubs not having read the North Hockey League Rules but we have been able to help them and reached an agreement or compromise.

### **LADIES COMPETITIONS 2015-2016**

NORTH CLUBS did not take place . North U21 was cancelled due to bad weather.

#### **COCK OF THE NORTH**

Winner Yorkshire Runner up Lancashire

Ann Edwards initially confirmed the teams and then handed over the organisation to a very competent Angie Clay. Angie organised a tournament which ran very smoothly. Andy Pettigrew sent out rules, team sheets etc. and did an excellent job as TD. Many thanks to all of them.

This tournament was planned for May 14 and 15 but was then delayed for 2 weeks as England Hockey booked the pitches. This caused some difficulty for counties as it then clashed with the North U21 Womens matches. Cumbria had to withdraw and Lincolnshire entered a team at short notice.

Yorkshire retained their North Women's County Championships title at Wakefield last weekend finishing top on goal difference from Lancashire.

At the end of the first day of competition Yorkshire were in top place with Cheshire in second, both teams having played three matches. Lancashire were third but had only played twice.

The key match for this competition was the Yorkshire vs Lancashire game that was played on Saturday morning and despite a lively encounter with plenty of end-to-end action neither team could score.

A young Isle of Man team gained victory over Lincolnshire by a single goal and they narrowly lost 3-2 to Cheshire later in the day. Durham beat Lincs but were no match for Lancashire who won 4-0 and Cheshire narrowly squeezed past Durham 1-0. At the end of the day Yorkshire's two wins, 3-1 against Cheshire and 7-0 against Isle of Man plus the draw against Lancs put them in pole position ready for Day two.

Most results on the second day went with the form book and both Yorks and Lancs knew that goal difference would probably decide the title. Lancs put six past Isle of Man and five past Cheshire but it was probably the low 3-0 win against Lincolnshire that made the difference. Yorkshire meanwhile came out in fine form winning 10-1 against a Durham team depleted by injury and their 7-0 win in the last game of the day was enough to retain the trophy.

In the final reckoning Lancashire's excellent defence (no goals conceded in five games) was just not enough and it was the goals for column that told the story. Cheshire will go home well satisfied with their 3<sup>rd</sup> place with three wins, and Isle of Man were also pleased with their performance from a young team that promises well for the future.

Durham ran their legs off and were often unlucky not to score more, but with a small squad and injuries were not able to compete in the way they would have wished. Durham, like Lincolnshire, had players new to this level of competition and both squads will take away many positives from the weekend.

Alderley Edge and Harrogate should be congratulated for reaching EH Women's Trophy final which Alderley Edge won on shoot out after a 1-1 draw. Congratulation to Formby on reaching EH Women's Vase and EH Mixed Final which was held yesterday. Unfortunately both finals were lost by the odd goal.

All league committees and division secretaries do a huge amount of work and spend many hours over a season so that hockey matches can be played and everyone can get details and results. We owe them our thanks for what can, at times, be a difficult and demanding task.

I thank everyone who contributes to this committee, and particularly Pete Cocker as secretary of this group, for all the effort and work they put in. Their efforts and invaluable experience, knowledge, patience and support together with the amount of time they give goes unnoticed by those who play hockey but they are the integral and essential ingredient of hockey in the North.

Anne Bryant