

Presidents Report - 2016

Squash ACT achieved a lot in 2015.

We:

- We took back full ownership of our shop. This means all profits go directly back to Squash ACT. Our members have positively received this and we are seeing good sales. I would like to personally thank Dick O'Rourke for his counsel during our transition process. He provided exceptional assistance to help us move forward. Courtenay has also done a lot of work to get things moving including stocking and managing the shop. No easy task.
- We continued the successful regeneration of the Division 10 and 11 Pennant competition to ensure that all these players receive coaching, referee training, games relevant to their skill level and importantly all remain in contention for the finals right up to the last round. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the retention of players at the bottom end. However, I do note that as of this current competition this program has been cancelled. Something that needs to be looked at I believe.
- Social bookings have increased with most Centres' reporting that they are very busy from around 4pm onwards.
- Pennant teams have stabilized not going up or down.
- Juniors have seen an increase.
- We have developed a Facilities Plan, which allows Government to consider us in any sporting precinct development. We continue to converse with the ACT Government to determine how we may progress the ongoing development of squash as a sport in the ACT.
- We are looking to increase our competition types to cater for those who do not wish to play pennant. This is critical as we move from a Board that is focused on financial survival to one that is focused on growing the sport. To that end we have recently added racquetball to our list of things people can do. Even though this is in 2016 the platform for adding this has come about due to our ongoing financial security.
- We have been in negotiations to sell our glass squash court, and should that occur, we are looking to have around a third of our debt paid off by the middle of 2017. This will allow us to do more to grow the sport.
- Importantly we saw the reinvigoration of the Squash ACT Open that saw 68 participants in its first year, 90 in 2015 and with the addition of racquetball we are hoping for 100 this year.
- We have invested in SportyHQ to provide an online booking system for Woden which also allows us to collect statistics and manage bookings more effectively.
- We have significantly reduced costs across the Board in 2015 and I now believe we are at a point where it is hard to find more savings – never say never.
- From a junior perspective it is good to see the significant work that Helen and her team have done in 2015 to continue to grow our base and also the winning of a significant number of Green Shields was most pleasing.

We have, however hit hurdles in 2015. Our debt continues to hold us back in many ways. Going forward complacency will be the enemy of the Board. In the next three to five years it is critical that the Board keep aiming to make between \$70,000 and \$100,000 a year. With that comes the ability for us to go back to a principal and interest loan arrangement and this also allows us to pay our debt. I am of the believe that we cannot afford to have any debt and that all efforts that do not affect members need to be explored to pay off that debt. At present the Board has elected to put \$20,000 aside each six months to ensure we save in case things change quickly. This money will be used to pay off debt but at present is being used to offset our interest repayments. We currently have \$40,000 saved in that account with a further \$20,000 to go in around June 2016.

While I have nominated to be President this year I encourage all members to ensure that the Board does not go off track with this commitment to pay off our debt. My rough calculations say that if we can pay off the debt that we will effectively be making significantly more than \$100,000 a year. This would open up significant opportunities for the association.

Looking forward we will be running the ACT Open on 30 April – 1 May 2016. This is the third year running and I see this event as significant for our squash community especially our juniors who get the opportunity to play a range of different people. This year we will be introducing racquetball. At present we know of three coming from Adelaide just to play in this event. That sport is the fastest growing racquet sport in Victoria and South Australia with a \$12,000 tournament now in Albury. We have added this as a free product at Woden and have seen significant new players turn up. We hope to grow this to other centre's by providing clubs with a free day of racquetball.

In 2017 we are looking to potentially add badminton and table tennis to the ACT Open or Racquet and paddle sport open. We will begin discussions with those sports shortly. We may also run a PSA U/23 event at the same time.

Our CEO Courtenay Budgen continues to work tirelessly to grow our sport. She has done exceptional work in continuing to reduce our debt and has worked hard in managing both Squash ACT and the Woden Squash Centre.

The most pleasing thing in being financial again, albeit still in debt, is that we can begin to invest back into the players. This has included the following, which in part will occur in 2016:

- We have introduced paid advertising on our tins at a very low cost to encourage sponsorship of our juniors. Any money paid above the \$400 per year is re-invested into club junior programs. We currently have \$1,100 available for use, which has all been paid by Alucom. I encourage clubs to send the Board an email stating how they may use some of that funding.
- Support to run a referee course in April 2016 – to gain more referees.
- Support provided to bring someone from NSW to provide coaching training.
- Holding off on any fee increase for Pennant for the whole of 2015 and first comp of 2016.
- Reducing ACT Open entry fees in 2015.

While some of these may seem insignificant to you it is important to note that this level of support has not been seen since I have been in the ACT. I arrived in 2000.

On a sad note we have seen the passing of a number of players this year at both Dickson and Vikings.

Lastly this AGM will see four people stand down from the Board. These are Rose Nuttall, Helen Southwell, Neville Sheather and Troy Davey.

Rose Nuttall came is only one year into her term but she has seen in the employment of a book keeper, a regular monthly report to the Board and a significant reduction in the amount of work that the Finance Director does. These are all great gains for ACT Squash.

Helen Southwell has been on the Board for many years and has been the go between juniors and the ACT Board. Without this knowledge the Board would not have a voice for the players of the future. She has provided significant time to the juniors and will continue to do so going forward. I for one have valued Helen's advice and considered approach to anything we have been involved in together.

Troy Davey has also been on the Board for many years and he has provided significant advice on facilities and a general calming hand when needed. He has also ensured that the Board remains true to itself and does not get caught up in issues that can be solved swiftly. He is also always happy to assist and provide frank advice. Something I have valued.

I would also like to thank Neville Sheather. Neville has been active across Squash for many years. Similar to Helen in many ways. Neville has held positions as Vice President, President of the Competition Committee and other roles. He has no issue with assisting with any task. In 2015 he assisted with putting up the glass squash court in Bathurst and in pulling it down. I for one would like to thank him for his efforts and note that he has, in the past three months now officially retired from playing competition squash, registrar of Vikings Squash, President of the Competition Committee and now Vice President of Squash ACT.

I thank all of the remaining Board members for the work they have done and now look forward to the next year I have in being hopefully your President.