



CHELMSFORD HOCKEY CLUB

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020

When reviewing the past year for Chelmsford Hockey Club it's difficult to look beyond two tumultuous, but very different, events.

COVID-19 has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths worldwide and impacted the lives of billions of people, possibly permanently changing the way we live our lives. While its impact on hockey is insignificant in comparison, the level of disruption to our sport is unprecedented. It is true that we have seen a resumption in some hockey activity in the past few weeks, but the road ahead is still uncertain and the effects, particularly financially, will be felt for some time to come. We shall continue to follow Government and England Hockey guidance to ensure a safe return to playing hockey.

As COVID-19 was starting to take a grip on our lives many of us were still reeling from the sad news of the sudden passing of our club President, Spencer Wilcox, shortly after leaving the hockey pitch at Indian Gymkhana. Spencer's contribution to Chelmsford HC over the past forty years, as Secretary, Chairman and President, has been immense but only tells part of the story. It overlooks everything else he did, such as pitch bookings, liaison with Chelmsford City Council, facilities maintenance, club dinner organisation, unblocking toilets and, of course, the recent pitch resurfacing. The list goes on, but I think you all understand what I mean. Above all else, he was our friend and a friend to everybody associated with Chelmsford Hockey Club and will be missed enormously.

Averil, Jonathan, Sarah and Spencer's extended family have suffered the greatest loss and continue to be in our thoughts. It was a great shame that COVID-19 restrictions prevented most of us from attending Spencer's funeral, but we shall have an opportunity to celebrate his life at an appropriate service when restrictions are lifted.

We shall, of course, overcome the very different challenges posed by these two events but it will take time and effort. I'm confident that our members will pull together and do what is necessary.

On the pitch, despite the curtailed season, three of our teams achieved promotion; the Ladies 3rd XI, the Men's 3rd XI and the Men's 7th XI. Especially pleasing was the fact that all three teams won their respective leagues. While congratulations are due to them, we must commiserate with the Men's 5th & 6th XIs following their relegation.

Our Ladies' 1st XI consolidated their EHL place in the first season after regaining that place, while the Men's 1st XI finished in a comfortable mid-table position in the East League. With the recent appointment of two new and ambitious coaches for these teams, hopes are high that they will be able to kick-on this season from these firm foundations.

Several post season events were cancelled due to COVID-19, including the biennial Zevenbergen junior tour (for 2020 we were hosts), Ladies' Night and the Men's dinner, the Golf Day, several junior training camps, both summer leagues and the Guinness World Record attempt. Nevertheless, the Beer Festival and Whisky Tasting (25th Anniversary), both held earlier in the season, were a roaring success, raising over £2,500 for club funds. Fundraising and social events will be even more important this season as we seek to rebuild our finances after COVID-19.

Junior hockey continues to be a focus for our club. I'll leave our Junior Section Chairman, David Ireland, to cover the details, but our schools programme and the new Hockey Heroes initiative, both led by Sally Dalton, continue to attract new players, while Sally's holiday camps are enjoyable for the players, successful revenue generators for the club... and a welcome relief for the parents!

There will be a few role changes this season as you would expect. I'd like to thank everybody, whether they are stepping down from a role, taking on a new role, remaining in situ or, in a handful of cases, moving to a different role. You can see the details for yourself on the list of officers presented to the AGM so I shan't mention everybody. However, I shall single out Bunny King who is stepping down from her dual roles of Club Umpires Secretary and Umpires Liaison Officer after many years' service. We don't have a replacement yet, but I'd like to thank Bunny for her efforts, wish her well for the future and hope she can now find the time to keep Nigel in check!

As now seems to be customary in my annual report, I appeal to all club members to please volunteer to do something for **your** club. I hear lots of advice, complaints and criticism of club activities, facilities and management, and I have no problem with that but, if every dissatisfied club member took on a role, imagine what we could achieve! The bottom line is that, if you don't do more, you will all pay more.

Apart from the loss of Spencer Wilcox, this season has seen the passing of a number of other Chelmsford HC stalwarts. Former Fixture Secretary and Evergreens Captain, Fred Matthews, passed away at the start of the season after a long period of ill-health, while Vice-President, former GB international and Felsted School master, John Cockett, died towards the end of the season. Another Vice-President and former 1st XI Captain, Michael Spencer, passed away shortly after the end of the season. Our thoughts are with the families and friends of all.

Finally, my personal thanks to all the Management Committee members and to the Chelmer Park ground staff - Martin, Shane and Alan - who, as well as discharging their statutory duties, are always willing to help. We do appreciate your efforts.

David Kitchiner, June 2020