



TYNEMOUTH SQUASH

SEASON 2016/17 REVIEW

AFTER THE UNPRECEDENTED SUCCESS OF THE 2015/16 SEASON, IT WAS ALWAYS GOING TO BE A DIFFICULT TASK TO REPEAT THOSE ACHIEVEMENTS.

After the unprecedented success of the 2015/16 season, it was always going to be a difficult task to repeat those achievements. With an historic 5-title haul last year, 3 teams playing in a higher division and a number of key players leaving, consolidation was the objective for most of the squads from the outset.

In the Premier League, Tynemouth Firsts, the defending League and Northumbria Cup champions, had to deal with the impending departure of club #1 Sean Millington, as well as having to contend with an all-star Newcastle University squad, a strong Jesmond team and a talented young Northern outfit.

Clad in their smart new Black Knight team wear, they started

their title defence brightly, winning the first 3 matches and putting 55 points on the board in the process, including a home tense encounter with Sunderland. The visitors recovered from early defeats by Hannah Cliff and Samantha Ward to level the match at 2 a piece, before Millington wrapped up the victory with a win at the top of the order.

The early winning streak came to an end in late October though, the University showing their prowess in the new season, sending out a statement of intent to the rest of the league with an emphatic 5-0 win over the Firsts. The evergreen Jon Evans pushed former England Captain Bryan Beeson close, the Welsh veteran taking the lead 2-1. However the 15 time County Champion answered back strongly to take the victory

in 5. At the number 1 spot, a fired up Millington could do nothing to halt the imperious Chris Wiggins, the big man dealing Sean his only defeat of his shortened season, and complete the 5-love sweep.

They bounced back with a 5-0 win of their own over a depleted Westoe, before succumbing to back-to-back 4-1 defeats to Jesmond and Alnwick, Jamie Todd facing the unenviable task of consecutive match-ups against Dave Barnett and Danny Hockborn, having taken over the mantle of Club #1.

An upturn in form however led to an unexpected surge up the table, and a 5 match unbeaten run stretching from December to February saw them claw some ground back at the business end of the table. Impressive wins



away at Northern and Sunderland saw a more settled team, with Todd finding his feet at the top of the order and new arrival Neil Harrison, drafted in to fill the missing spot in the team, coming into form after a rocky start at #5.

They finished the season strongly, with a run of 8 wins from 9 games, their only loss coming at the hands of runaway league leaders, Newcastle University. It was not quite the dominant, one-sided performance of the reverse fixture earlier in the season however, with Nick Hale and Toby Cockill putting Tynemouth ahead, and Harrison a whisker away from sealing the upset, leading after 2, with both him, and the team, eventually going down 3-2.

With a spot in the end of year playoffs already secured, fantastic wins against Jesmond and Newbiggin to round off the campaign meant the Firsts finished the season runners up

to the University, a surprise given the early season struggles, and a testament to the effort and resolve involved in turning around the form from all. The second place finish gave them a chance of defending the Northumbria Cup they had lifted as part of the double last year. Facing #3 seeds Jesmond in the second semi-final, they took an early advantage through superb wins for Cliff and Cockill at #4 and #5, before the Northumbrelrand Club answered back with two victories of their own for county great Barnett and Premier League Player of the Season, the inform Michael Andrews at the top of the order. It was left to Hale to decide who would face-up against a well supported Uni team, who had already dispatched Northern in the other semi final. Despite Hale edging the first game, a long 12-10, it was Jesmond's young James Worsick who emerged victorious, holding off the fightback of the Tynemouth man, for a 11-9 win in the 4th set, and a place in the final.

In the Ladies Premier Division, it was again shaping up to be a battle between both Tynemouth

and Northern teams, although a revitalised Jesmond squad were hoping to cause some upsets and break into the top 4. With split teams at Tynemouth and Northern, the league was fiercely competitive throughout the season, more-so than it ever has been in recent years, and a wide open start to proceedings saw all 5 of the contenders putting together winning streaks of their own, and victories against each other. Both Tynemouth teams started well, with the 1A squad opening with 3 early victories, including a win over their club mates in a tight 3-2, to set the pace atop the Division. The 1B's answered back with some impressive performances of their own, 3 wins out of 4 to close out the first half of the season. It was the Northumberland Ladies that led going into Christmas however, bouncing back from an opening round defeat to our 1B's to put 5 wins on the board.

After the festive break, the Premier League split to leave the top 5 with home and away matchups against each other. The Northumberland Club Ladies couldn't match the pace they had



THE FIRSTS AND SECONDS LINE UP BEFORE THE OPENING GAME OF THE SEASON

set in the opening half, and faded as the season wore on, only managing 2 wins out of 8.

It was our two Tynemouth teams that emerged as the league leaders, trading wins and piling the pressure on each other at the top on almost a weekly basis. The 1B's gained revenge for their derby defeat earlier in the season, with impressive performances from the experienced duo of Dawn Ward and Gill Millington and the youthful Rowell twins, Amy & Emma, the catalyst in clinching a 4-1, despite the best efforts of Hannah Cliff at #1 on the opposing team. Consistently putting vital points on the board

to secure a 3-2 win, and take the lead in the seasons Tynemouth mini-series. Coinciding with a great run of form in 2017, 7 wins to close out the season, they were still in contention with a few games left. Requiring almost a maximum point haul from the final two games, all eyes were on their performances in the games against the two Northern teams.

They fell agonisingly close however, as a 3-2 victory in the penultimate game was enough to gift the title to the club mates, Tynemouth 1B's becoming Premier League Champions after a remarkable season in which they kept putting points on the

a brilliant League and Cup double for the season, the third double in a row for Tynemouth Ladies, with Gilly Millington involved in all three.

The Mens Second team faced an uphill battle in the Premier League from the opening game. Missing the heroics of Lenny Westover from last season, re-deployed from his Newcastle barracks, and the fit-again-but-Yale-bound Lucy Beecroft, it was a tough season for last years Division 1 and League Cup winners. An agonising run of 3-2 defeats (4 in a row), early in the season, spelled out the story for the rest of the year, as despite the best efforts of the

team, they were unable to avoid the drop back into Division 1. They did however gain a vital season Premier League experience, with Hannah, Samantha, Sam Evans and Richard Bradley all acquitting themselves well with the demands of the top division and racking up some wins in



to widen the gap at the top of the division, they finished their campaign by the end of March, and were left to wait on other results before they were sure of their final league position.

The 1A's rebounded well from the defeat to their team mates, mounting a challenge for the title of their own. In the third derby of the season, the 1A's emerged victorious in yet another tense showdown, wins for Nicky Dobson and Fiona MacFarlane and a lung-busting comeback from Premier League Player of the Season Hannah Cliff, enough

board, even in defeat, with an excellent blend of experience and youth.

With the Tynemouth teams seeded #1 and #2 for the end of season Northumbria Cup, eyes were on both semi-finals as the club looked to guarantee a cup victory for the season by having both representatives in the final. The Ladies duly obliged, seeing off the challenges of Northern and Jesmond to set up yet another inter-club derby. Under the captaincy of Samantha Ward, it was the 1B's who emerged victorious in the final to complete

the process, most memorably doing the double over a strong Sunderland team, and taking down Alnwick during a great Premier League double header evening at the club which saw the First team also in home action.

Joining them in Division 1 next year will be the Third Team, following a great campaign in Division 2. After being the only Tynemouth squad not involved in last seasons emphatic trophy sweep, they were determined to make their mark this time round. Buoyed by the arrival of the classy Liam Dobbin at the #1 spot,

and the ever improving junior duo of Matty Walsh and Lennox Lockwood, they overcame some early season hiccups to mount a fine late season charge for promotion. A resounding 5-0 win in their penultimate game of the season over fellow promotion contenders Primrose, saw great wins

for Dobbin, Walsh, Lockwood and Nathan Dobson. A now trademark win in 5 for Rob Brown completed the comprehensive victory, and revenge for the early season defeat. The win meant that the Thirds only required 8 points from their final game at Northern, to overhaul the Primrose team, and beat them to the runners-up spot. The duly obliged, with wins for Dobbin, Lockwood and Dobson paving the way for a 3-2 team success, and 18 points overall, to seal a great 2nd place finish, and promotion to the second tier of the Northumbria Leagues, alongside run away champions, Newcastle University Thirds.

It was not to be a fourth successive promotion for Tynemouth Fourths, as despite some impressive performances, including two nail biting wins over Newbiggin and a 4-1 success versus club mates, the Socials, their incredible rise up the divisions in recent seasons was finally halted. A great run of form in the new year, 6 wins in 7, saw them with an outside chance of sneaking into the top 2, however they finished the campaign a

comfortable 3rd, well clear of

of victories, they slipped down to mid table as the season wore on. One bright spot was the emergence of Tom Allan in the middle of the order. A great return of 14 wins from 18 games, included 2 fantastic performances playing up for the Fourths in the latter parts of the campaign.



their nearest challengers in 4th. Damaging 3-2 defeats at the hands of Northern and the Socials had cost them in their pursuit of promotion, although there was a modicum of satisfaction to be gained in a comprehensive late season 5-love win over title hopefuls Washington. On a night when it all came together for the Tynemouth quintet of Nathan Dobson, John Thompson, Rob Bolt, Ross Mazzucchi and Steve Brown, revenge for their pre-Christmas defeat saw the title slip from the visitors hands and the initiative in the race for top spot passed to eventual winners Benwell Hill.

It was a similar story in Division 5. With the Fifth Team coming off a successful campaign last time out, consolidation in the league was the main objective. A solid start behind a top order of Stuart Varrall and Guy Eniona saw them outside contenders at the upper end of the table. However, with Varrall departing for warmer climates down under during the mid-season break, they struggled to keep up their early season promise in the second half. Unable to string together any run

After a runner-up medal in last years second tier, the Ladies Thirds began the revamped league structure in Division 2. After a great first half of the season, which included a win over long time divisional rivals Northern 3. Consistent performances from the experienced Margaret Algar, Sharron Mather, Miriam Evans, Sylvia Wilson and Lorna Cameron through the first half saw the Ladies top the table heading into the festive break. With the league splitting into three divisions in the New Year, the second half of the season proved to be a tougher task for the Thirds. The recruitment of junior Olivia Steanson gave the team some youthful impetuosity, but they could not keep up the early pace they had set and found themselves in the middle of the pack come the end of the season.

Outside of the team structure, the Tynemouth Ladies once again asserted their dominance at the County Closed. Samantha Ward, saving her best performance of the campaign, overcame Second Team team mate Hannah Cliff in an enthralling final to become County Champion for the 4th time. Hannah did claim

silverware of her own, lifting the Northumbria Open title at Jesmond in March, while also scooping the Ladies Premier Division Player of the Season after an astonishing undefeated League season. The duo also pulled on the Northumbrian colours to represent the county's senior team, whilst the Tynemouth quadruplet of Jon Evans, Paul Millington, Glenn Ward and Peter Slaughter were joined by Bryan Beeson and Ronnie Freeman to wreak havoc on the Masters scene, closing the year with a remarkable O55 National title.

The junior scene continues to thrive, with great results both locally and nationally for the likes of Lennox, Nathan, Sam Sweeney, Lewis Cruz, Charlie Took and the Kings, Ben and Emily. Emily also received a well deserved call-up to the county's Girls U13 squad. Jamie Todd finished his junior career in style at the Scottish nationals, claiming the U19 title with a 3-0 victory in the final in Aberdeen.

Stand out junior performance of the season however was the rapidly improving Tom Walsh. The third Walsh off the production line, he followed in his eldest brother's footsteps to be crowned Northumbria U15 Count champion, 7 years since Andrew had lifted the trophy, and only one year removed from winning the U13 title himself.



SATURDAY MORNING REGULARS LEWIS CRUZ, EMILY KING, LUCY ANDERSON AND NATHAN DOBSON AT THE CARLISLE JUNIOR OPEN



CLUB CHAMPIONS HANNAH CLIFF AND CAI YOUNGER, AND COUNTY CHAMPION SAMANTHA WARD



U19 SCOTTISH CHAMPION JAMIE TODD



THE VICTORIOUS NORTHUMBRIA O55'S TEAM, FEATURING PAUL MILLINGTON, GLENN WARD, JON EVANS & PETER SLAUGHTER

A WORD FROM OUR MAN ON COURT FIVE

“It was always going to be a difficult season for most of the Mens teams with losing players at the top end of the scale, everyone having to move up and of course for several teams, playing in a higher division following promotion next year.

The season ended on a high with the Tynemouth Ladies dominating their Premier League with standout performances from both #1s in Sam Ward and Hannah Cliff, both of whom also performed with distinction in

the Mens Teams. Congratulations to Ladies 1b for a League and Cup double, pressed all the way by Ladies 1a.

As always it is good to see the emerging young talent in the Club climbing up the team structure and in the year ahead we will be seeking to blood more juniors in the Mens 5th team and Ladies teams as the opportunity arises.

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A huge thank you to all that have been involved in the achievements of the teams, from the captains, coaches and players, to the members that have lent their support throughout what has been a yet another successful season. We hope you have enjoyed this campaign, and are hungry for more next year.

TSRC

#teamtynemouth