

PTTC PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON 2018/19 SEASON

All in all, Season 2018 /2019 has been a good one for the Club.

After Team 1's relegation last year, they started the season as one of the favourites to win promotion back to the Premier League. Whilst it was never going to be an easy task, they secured promotion with a little to spare in the end and they completed their season without losing a match. Greig McDonell, Colin Green, David Melrose & Iain Johnstone all enjoyed good seasons, with all finishing in the top 10 of the individual averages. Greig and Colin effectively played on a rotational basis and they combined for a fantastic 73 wins out of 81 matches played. David and Ian did most of the work in the team playing 114 games between them and averaging a 75% win ratio. Whatever the combination, the side also had a great win rate in the doubles – 20 out of 22 matches won. An immediate return to the Premier League was well deserved.

Meanwhile, Team 2 were threatened with relegation at various points during the season. They found the Division tough going and missed some great opportunities in the first half to ease their relegation worries – 5 points at Christmas saw Gary McDougal, Charlie Brindley and Krzysztof Laszkiewicz in real trouble. When they lost to fellow strugglers, Murrayfield 5 in February and then that was followed by a loss to bottom of the table Corstorphine 2, it seemed the writing was on the wall for Team 2. Remarkably, however, they managed to pick up points with two draws against 2nd place Edinburgh Int and West Lothian 3. A win against North Merchiston 3 gave them real hope and when they defeated second bottom Fife, they had all but secured their survival. 12 points over the season was good enough just to avoid relegation with a 3rd bottom finish, the same position and same points total as they had in the previous season. Going forward it looks like Team 2 need to be strengthened before their luck runs out in Division 1! Individually it was a disappointing year with Gary leading the way with 45%, Charlie close behind on 43% and Krzysztof on 24%.

There were high hopes that the foursome of James Wighton, Chris Markey, Ian Hislop and Abby Wighton could secure promotion from Division 2 after Team 3's relegation from Division 1 last season. Unfortunately, in Murrayfield 6 and Edinburgh International 3 they had teams with cracking players who would have comfortably given good accounts of themselves in Division 1. Murrayfield went through the season undefeated with only 1 draw spoiling a perfect year. Meanwhile Edinburgh International, somewhat controversially, had Babu Valaguruvan in their ranks and he strolled through 42 matches without dropping a game – he was then committed up into Division 1 where he helped Ed Int 2 secure promotion to the Premier. In the four matches played against the top 2, Team 3 came out on the wrong side of a 33-7 game difference and that was where their hopes were effectively ended. A fourth-place finish for Team 3 was a decent return and Ian showed his class with 33 wins out of 39 games played. The Wighton duo will be disappointed with their efforts, 60% for Abby and 58% for James. They're both much better players than those averages suggest. Chris never really got going and out of his 24 matches played he won 11.

In Division 3, Team 4's season also promised much as the ever-improving Sonny joined forces with dad Julian Taylor and the returning Tony Brentnall, hoping to prove the Club selectors wrong in keeping them down in Division 3! Like Team 3, they were unlucky that in Murrayfield 9, they had competition from the conveyor belt of young talent that Murrayfield seem to produce – Charlie McGowan and Haydn Jackson winning 84 of 90 games played. They secured the title without losing a point. Promotion was still up for grabs, however, with Haddington and Edinburgh International standing in Team 4's way. El Presidente still can't get over Team 4's match v Ed Int in the first half of the season – they agreed to reschedule for their opponents benefit and then couldn't field a full team themselves – a 6-4 defeat ensued, and significant damage was done to the side's promotion hopes. Early in the second half of the season they faced Murrayfield and Haddington – two 6-4 losses summed up Team 4's season – so close yet so far. If they had won the match

against Haddington they would have secured promotion – that’s how close they came! Julian performed well throughout the season with 77%, Tony secured 68% and Sonny will be a little disappointed with his 65% finish – some close matches could so easily have gone his way.

And so in to Division 4. Stuart Bennett, John Bald, Craig Johnson and Millie Bennett started the season brilliantly – 10 wins in the first half of the season saw them sitting at the summit of the Division 4 table at Christmas. Then disaster struck – 3 consecutive defeats in the first 3 weeks of January, all against fellow promotion hopefuls saw their season take a nose dive. The way results went, they suddenly found themselves 5 points adrift of top spot and remarkably languishing in 5th place. With 7 matches to go, Haddington 5 turned up at Ladywood just as John Bald injured himself and was unable to play – George was stolen from Team 7 and from that point Team 5 went on an amazing run to end the season with 7 consecutive wins. Luck was on their side as other wins for other teams helped them claw their way back into the title race and in the last week of the season, they knew a win v North Merchiston would secure them promotion – they duly delivered. Individually, prior to his departure from these shores, John led the way with a 5th place finish in the Individual averages with 84%. Craig also made it in to the top 10 with a 76% win rate. Stuart and Millie combined for 41 wins although Millie will be a little disappointed after the way she started her season to have ended up with just over 50%. Promotion was only secured as a result of terrific support from Teams 6 and 7. George and Louis were crucial parts of that fantastic run-in, to the detriment of their own teams but to the huge benefit of the Club as we managed to avoid having 3 teams in Div 4 next season.

Team 6 saw Rachel Petrie, Louis McLeod, Adam Woodhouse and new boy Craig Linton join forces. Had they not started so poorly, who knows what they might have achieved. With Louis in their ranks they were always competitive but with only 4 points from the first 26 points available, this looked like being a nightmare season. Remarkably, however, from the next 22 points available they picked up 13. Louis led the way individually with 82% whilst Craig, in his first season did really well to get to 48%. Rachel and Adam both improved on their 2017/18 performances.

And finally, Team 7. George Wilson, Phil Daly, Hannah McDonell and Kristian Skotzen had a terrific season. A few avoidable dropped points took them out of the running for promotion early in the second half of the season. When Phil then had to pull out due to his eye surgery and George was committed to playing for Team 5, it looked like their season might fall apart – but credit to Kristian and Hannah who played a couple of terrific matches in consecutive weeks with only two players and secured 3 points out of a possible 4. They ended up in 5th place in the Division, a great return. George won 42 out of 48 games played and just missed out on the Individual award for Division 4. Hannah recorded a 60% win rate – a huge improvement from her 7% return from the previous year. Kristian is also improving and has one of the most domineering styles in the Club when he can put it all together – 20% last year and 51% this season. Phil had us worried for a bit after his eye surgery, but it was great to see him back playing at the end of the season – he won 2/3rds of his games before injury ruled him out for the second half.

Away from the League, what great performances by our various teams in the Handicap Cup. 3 out of 4 made it to the Quarter finals, 2 of them moving on to the semis and an all Penicuik final was a real possibility. The narrowest of defeats for George, Sonny & Abby led to Corstorphine reaching the final but revenge was gained as Tony, Gary & Louis beat them in the final end of the final match. This was a real team effort though and David and Craig had played their parts in earlier rounds getting the team to the final. Well done to all 5.

Player of the Year this year is a difficult one. The best overall percentages belong to Greig and Colin in Division 1 – but they were playing at a level where that was expected. The same can be said for Ian H – 85% in Division 2 should have been expected! A 77% win rate for Julian in Div 3 is well worthy of a mention whilst a number of our Division 4 players put in terrific seasons. Louis didn’t have the best season last year in Div 3 and was disappointed to be placed in Division 4 this year – in fairness to Louis, he seems to perform better against better players so his 82% in Div 4

is a great return – he is also due great credit as stated previously for his part in Team 5's promotion. Hannah received the Junior Player of the Year Award from the League for her good season both at League level and in tournament play, recognising her improvement, the fact that she won her first national title and her gaining two caps for Scotland. But this year's award goes to one of her teammates, George. 87% in Div 4 for Team 7 - so what we hear you say – that's not remarkable – add to that, however, that he played 21 games for Team 5 and of those 21 games (all of them being crucial) he won the lot – that gives him a record of 63 games won out of 69 played and one which we thought was worthy of the Individual award for Division 4. Whilst he didn't get that, he did win the most improved Veteran Award and according to his young teammate is a great Captain (not sure Phil and Kristian agree but I'm swayed by the honesty of youth)! So well done to him.

A few thanks to finish. Firstly, we have a number of players who will be plying their trade at pastures new next season – Louis has been an ever present at the Club for what seems like a huge number of years now – it can't be that long though because he's just finished school – he's off to St Andrews University and we wish him all the best there – hopefully his TT will continue to improve and we'll see him back at the Club in the future. He has been a real credit to PTTC. Another couple of our youngsters are also off to Uni – good luck to Millie and Adam. They're going more local so hopefully they might still visit us occasionally. At age 107, John B has genuinely played TT forever – he's off for some solitude for a year and maybe that will be extended!! Think I could last about an hour! He will be missing next season but hopefully back soon.

Thanks as always to Tom for his coaching of the kids (on the few Saturdays during the year that he's actually in this country – think he maybe managed about 6 weeks this season!!) On a serious note though, Congratulations to him on being awarded the TTS Honorary Life Member Award for his contribution to TT – the TTS AGM is also on 6th July so Tom will be there picking that up.

A big thank you to all the adults who have come along on a Saturday to help with the kids but a special mention to our nicest Team Captain, James for his help. With Hannah thinking that my coaching isn't good enough for her, she gets dropped off elsewhere on a Saturday morning making me invariably late for the kids – James has stepped into the breach and has been a huge help – Hannah and I are very grateful!

And finally, it's with sadness that we will be saying goodbye to our Treasurer, Craig as he moves away from the area to the East Renfrewshire area. Not only will Craig be a huge miss for his TT, but he has been an excellent Treasurer for the Club and will be hard to replace. He's an all-round good guy and he will be missed – best wishes to him and his family in their new adventure. He has said, however, after the success of this year that he will make a guest appearance by video link to use his random generator and pick next year's Handicap Cup Teams!

Another season over – the Club will get back into action next month and the good news is that after a year gap, Saltire have been persuaded to sponsor us again – maybe Brian will also manage to get that money out of his pal at Clippers – the interest payable is now greater than the 250 quid he promised us back in 2004! Speaking of Brian – it was good to see him back after his hip operation and obviously a big thank you to him for his excellent work as Club Secretary – even if he remains vehemently opposed to the AGM and meal moving to Lauder!