

BUSINESS OF TENNIS FORUM 2019



DAN BLOXHAM

the AELTC coach gave an energetic and engaging presentation

Programme and the development of Padel tennis.

There were seven Strategies which involved, Visibility, Innovation, Investment, Accessibility, Engagement, Performance and Leadership.

Declaring that 'Tennis is for Everyone', Pollard aimed to increase the fan base from the current 635K to 1million by 2023; improve the data the LTA holds as well as their Digital Programme to make it easier to book a court and finding opponents of a similar standard.

There is also an LTA App which is continually being improved, he said.

Ms Lench broke down the sport by age and frequency of play on court, as well the number of courts per club – 26% with 1-3 courts, 37% with 4-7 and 17% with 8 or more making up the number of 2566 courts at registered clubs.

A booklet entitled 'A self-service Guide to Growing Club Membership' is available from the LTA and provides a greater picture for all to study.

Rounding off the LTA's contribution, Murray, the founder of British Padel which has integrated with the LTA, expanded on this fast-rising sport already extremely popular in Spain and Italy as well as South America,

Three courts fit into one tennis court maximising space. It is very fast and social, attracting and retaining new audiences. Tennis World in Middlesbrough is a good example of what could be achieved.

He also reports that the country already has 65 courts with 4187 players, 71% being male and 29% female and, with the amalgamation, the LTA inherited the British Padel Tour which boasts 40 tournaments throughout the UK.

The All England Club again played host to the Tennis Industry Association UK's annual Business Forum, the sixth edition of this popular gathering to discuss and aid individuals whose careers are focused around sport and tennis in particular.

Every year the meetings have grown and the 2019 conference was no exception with 110 delegates packing into the Courtside Suite within the Centre Court building at the AELTC where the experienced broadcaster Marcus Buckland, acting again as the day's host, welcomed everyone and got the ball rolling following the TIA chairman, Steve Matthews' brief outline of the day's programme coupled with his own words of welcome.

There was no overall title for the day's agenda except to say it covered a mix of 'Industry and Club' but Matthews did highlight their 'Tennis Club Business Report 2019' which, backed by the LTA, has provided a summary of the results of their survey of 15 of the top tennis and sports clubs in the country.

The results are interesting, but it requires a larger base of respondents to make it the benchmark which the TIA wants to stimulate

and help grow the sport in the UK. A call for more clubs to respond was made.

The first of the speakers was David Minton from the Leisure Database Company, who explained the lessons which can be learnt from the global expansion of fitness and how clubs can benefit from adding that facility or improving it.

He went through various elements of the fitness industry and how it has evolved into a \$5billion sector, suggesting a lot of it could stimulate tennis and more specifically, clubs.

The Big Tech companies were keen to associate themselves with Aggregate companies who were compiling data to help the likes of Google and Amazon to expand into the sports arena.

The LTA then took to the stand with Chris Pollard, Head of Strategy and Innovation, Abbie Lench, Head of Clubs, Counties and Volunteering, and Tom Murray, Head of Padel.

Between the three, delegates were updated on Scott Lloyd's 'Tennis Opened Up' vision which he had shared with them at last year's Forum, expanding on its actual delivery through key strategic projects including the LTA's new Junior Programme, Digital

DELEGATES

participating and enjoying the interactive session by Dan Bloxham

He pointed out it wasn't just about money in brown paper envelopes, but also covers heavy discounts being provided in exchange for sponsorship, etc. In other words, providing any form of advantage.

Volunteers, for instance, could only receive expenses related to the actual event like travel. Any form of 'payment' or 'reward' can be deemed as bribery and could result in the culprit receiving if convicted, a possible 10-year prison sentence!

On that note the delegates retired for a cup of tea before resuming with Mike Lynch at the rostrum, focusing on the 'Your Most Valuable Asset'.

Lynch, the CEO of ServeSPORT, examined the way clubs and coach can work together to provide a first-class service for members. He detailed some of the key issues facing club and coach, and no doubt surprised many when he pointed out the risks which clubs face if dealing with coaches on a 'self-employed' basis.

HMRC has tightened the rules regarding that sort of relationships, and if they investigate a club and find they have transgressed, the financial penalties on that club could be huge, particularly if they investigate back over several years and take into consideration interest etc.

It was vital that a service agreement was signed, making it clear what the club expects and outlining what would happen if those objectives are not met by the coach.

The day's programme concluded with Ken Schofield CBE discussing how tennis and golf could learn from each other which he did by reminiscing quite a bit over the many years he had been involved in sport, including cricket.

It was a nice way to finish off what had been a varied agenda, leaving many of the departing delegates with much to ponder.

EXHIBITORS

TIA UK members showcased their products for the delegates



Following the LTA's recent adoption of Padel tennis, and its appeal to enhance membership at clubs, Andy Burrell of Chiltern Sports Contractors did an excellent job of explaining how the courts were built, the cost involved and some of the pitfalls which could be encountered, all outweighed by the benefits.

Under the overall heading of 'Thinking Padel?', Burrell was joined by Lee West, a Director of Sports Facility Planning and Design Ltd, who went into greater depth as regards planning, design and the procurement issues of building Padel courts.

Between them, it was revealed that the cost of a Padel court was in the region of £45-50K and that the maintenance of them was around the 1K pa with

Chiltern Sports the UK agents for the Spanish padel court manufacturers, Rigan Sports.

Having watched all morning a series of slides, graphs, charts, accompanying the various presentations outlined on the screens around the room, lunch provided a very welcome break and, for those who had never visited Wimbledon before, an opportunity to be shown around the famous tennis venue.

The afternoon session kicked off with Dan Bloxham, the AELTC's Head Coach who reported on the progress of the Club's Junior Initiative, the place Wimbledon holds in the sport and the value of the Wimbledon brand which has expanded into various countries, in particular, the Far East.

His presentation was punctuated by various 'games' involving the delegates and ensuring they all awoke from their lethargy-inducing lunch!

And he was very successful in that as he promoted the Britishness of Wimbledon around the world as the Club ensured there was no drop in standards. The actual Fortnight maintained those traditions and would not have music between games and pre-match interviews with the players prior to entering the court as the other majors did!

The next presentation took the those present by surprise as Jonathan Askin, the Head of Commercial Law at BLM, the sponsors of the day, discussed the implications of a No Deal Brexit for smaller companies and clubs who had not already prepared for that eventuality.

While warnings, under the 'A Risky Business' tag, were no doubt appreciated, the session was very much a stark contrast to Bloxham's lively section.

Askin's colleague, Iskander Fernandez, a specialist in white-collar crime, highlighted a problem which many hadn't appreciated. The Bribery Act of 2010 has, in fact, transformed the way business and services operate.

