



NORTH DOWN PETANQUE CLUB

SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT TO AGM – 26 MARCH 2008

GENERAL SITUATION

The Club has continued to function well in the year just past. Encouragingly, for the first time in a number of years, we had an increase in membership and the completion of our competition programme.

CLUB NIGHTS/COMPETITIONS

The hard core of members who brave the elements throughout all the seasons, have continued to enjoy the 'craic' and camaraderie, whatever the conditions. Few, if any, nights were missed, and a substantial programme of competitions was completed. Pleasingly, a number of our more recent members took some of the honours in the competitions. Apart from the Singles competition, the format whereby teams are not pre-ordained but rather, are constituted to try to ensure a breadth of skill in each team, has contributed to the enjoyment, since more teams are still 'in with a shout' at the latter stages. As the organiser of most of the competitions, I want to record my thanks to the members who gave of their time to assist and compete. Thanks are also due to those who donated wine for the

ballot, which was a feature of most of the competitions.
Congratulations again to the various winners.

I reiterate what I said at last year's AGM, that the Committee would want to encourage all members to maximise their attendance at club nights and competitions, not only for its own sake, but also to ensure the best 'presentation' if/when potential new members come along.

THE COMMITTEE

The Committee met on 2 occasions during the year. The main outcomes of those meetings were;

- (a) For a modest £5 annual subscription, the club is now part of the North Down Sports Advisory Council, under the auspices of the North Down Borough Council. This organisation brings together representatives of many sports in the Borough and can provide benefits in terms of methods of fund-raising and awareness of our sport. Since joining, your Hon.Sec. has attended the one meeting which has been held, to discuss the Assembly's consultation paper on the future of sport in NI.
- (b) For the first time, the Club now has its own website, which may be helpful in attracting interest and keeping members up to date on programmes and progress. It also provides links to other National and club Petanque websites. Our website's Photo section will provide an opportunity to record competition winners, which is essential in keeping tabs on the whereabouts of trophies. Depending on the degree of support, the Photo section will also allow us to see members in their younger days, before their heads became those 'grey areas' one hears about. I would encourage all members to think about how the website can be improved and to contribute material, if possible.

REPRESENTATION

The Club continues to be represented at external competitions. Humberto Tavares was part of the team which won the Irish Triples in Dublin in April last. He and George Davidson competed in the 'Boule Blitz' doubles competition in Cork, winning the secondary competition. At national level, the same pairing won the Irish Doubles played at our own club's premises. The Irish Singles was also played at North Down where Humberto was defeated in the final.

North Down was again well represented in the Irish team competing in the Celtic Challenge in Abergavenny, where John Hennessy, George Davidson, Denis Nightingale and Humberto Tavares were part of the Ireland team which, sadly, did not do well, finishing third. The same members hope for a better outcome when they represent Ireland again in the forthcoming Celtic Challenge in May at Fochabers, near Inverness.

DEATH

Sadly, this year saw the death of Ralph Weir after a lengthy illness. Ralph and his late wife Linda were long term members of the club and worked hard to help establish the club in its infancy and to flourish in later years. Ralph was well known and respected in Petanque circles generally. The club sent a message of condolence to their children, Chris and Elayne, and was well represented at the funeral.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we can take heart from the improvement in membership and competition activity and the continuing involvement and success of members at International and National level. In addition, the recent confirmation that Pickie Bowling Club has retained the annual tariff at a manageable £500, will relieve

financial pressure, and allow us to concentrate on the ever present problem of ways of improving membership rather than raising finance. Again, we should take encouragement from the fact that some of our most recent members have been solid in their attendance, leading to competition success in a number of instances. A sign, perhaps, that you get out of the game is directly linked to what you put in.

Finally, I'm sure that all who are present here will want to offer their best wishes to our President, David McHenry. His demeanour and attitude as he continues to deal with his illness are to be admired.