

SENIORS ANNUAL REPORT 2020.

Due to circumstances beyond our control, and subject to agreement at our forthcoming AGM, my year as Captain of the Seniors will be spread over a two year period which effectively makes this an interim report (several other local clubs are adopting a similar approach).

The Winter was particularly wet and followed in March by the global pandemic necessitating the closure of the golf course and clubhouse. Seniors golf resumed on the 18th June, but under “new normal” conditions. This might imply that our committee was relatively inactive but in fact both individually and collectively all the Seniors officers had a very challenging time revising procedures and identifying ways that would enable us to recommence golf safely in accordance with government and central golf directives.

As our new Winter League co-ordinator, Nick Rogerson got the year off to a good start with 7 out of our 8 matches not rain affected. Unbeaten at home we finished a creditable joint first on points with Alresford but subsequently were placed 2nd as the rules stated that in the event of a tie most away wins was the deciding factor. Thanks also to Tony Cattrell who continues to maintain the website with many of us checking the results table to establish all the various permutations – great fun!

As Competition Secretary, Tony Czapp faced constant disruptions due to poor weather which resulted in 3 separate attempts to complete the Christmas Cup competition finally achieved 6 weeks after the original date. With February then becoming one of the wettest months since records began 5 consecutive Thursday competitions were disrupted and led to new procedures being drafted establishing how many players/ teams were needed to start and finish to have a valid result. Commendably Tony maintained a sense of humour despite a lot of planning proving unproductive.

Upon assuming the role of Vice Captain, David Clark enquired “what exactly was his role”? At the end of April I had an illness that required 8 weeks of convalescing - can I thank everyone for their concern and good wishes during this period. During my absence David took the helm which required 4 Zoom meetings trying to second guess a way forward towards resuming golf. He was outstanding, tackling a wide range of issues and agreeing revised procedures. Emails were flying around and it was very evident how the entire committee fully engaged in establishing workable solutions.

At the same time our Secretary, John Dymott sent out regular newsletters even though initially there was no news! Communication was vital to enable us all to keep in touch and in the absence of public gatherings and weekly prayers has continued to provide benefit throughout the year. Our committee are all very aware of the adverse effect of the COVID procedures on the Senior Section socialisation/ camaraderie etc. with our aim remaining to return to the “old normal” – when the time comes we will need to review how/ whether we can continue to benefit from some of the process changes we have made whilst retaining the ethos that has built the Seniors Section over many years.

As lockdown restrictions were gradually eased it was obvious that our Summer programme was still subject to disruption. Every month our Diary Secretary, Malcolm Ogles, reviewed the Summer Friendly matches and again a lot of planning was wasted as we subsequently resumed these matches on the 25th August. Since then we have played 10 matches winning at home but losing away!

At the same time our Handicap Secretary, Charles Bone was heavily involved with the implementation of the iG system with our club included in the pilot before being rolled out across other sites. Special thanks are due to Charles who devoted much time and effort to iron out a lot of changes needed to meet our needs. It is largely through his efforts that he and the other Thursday organisers have got our Thursday processes working so well. This came alongside the need to maintain social distancing which again meant a lot of us were suddenly becoming familiar with Smart phone apps! We did have a concern over our critical dependency on programmes set up by Martin West, which served our section really well, but are now covered by iG.

David Dingley became Treasurer and again has been very creative in introducing payment systems to enable us to operate in a cashless way, at the expense of his own workload!

For a considerable period the likelihood of our Seniors Open taking place looked a forlorn hope. Following its postponement in June it was subsequently rearranged for the 1st October. 76 players competed under the planning and implementation of Hugh Brown and John Schonenberger, plus a new team of helpers. The end result more than justified the faith of those who were determined to find a safe way to run the event. It was a very slick day much appreciated by all who attended which included raising a very worthwhile sum for the Captains Charity, Winchester Hospice. The raffle raised £652.00 and I am now able to make a claim for Barclays Bank to match this sum with a similar donation.

Throughout the year Keith Dear and latterly Mike Gardiner have organised the 9 holers and this group remain an integral part of the Seniors section, invaluable for those not wishing to play 18 holes.

So in summary, I have provided quite a lot of detail for what amounts to an extraordinary year. The whole committee deserve our thanks for overcoming difficulties with brilliant results. Last year I spoke about the value of our committee and this year they have had to excel.

It should also be recorded that Past Captains have readily made their wisdom and experience available which again is both helpful and valuable.

My last thanks must go to everyone in the section for readily accepting the problems that have been placed upon us over the last 12 months and responding so positively. This is highlighted by the numbers playing every Thursday which often have exceeded 50 players. Our fundraising efforts this year have had to be restricted but I must thank everyone for supporting the Captains Charity. With the Seniors Open raising nearly £1,000.00 and Barclays matching the raffle proceeds the final sum for the year is nearly £2,100.00. I propose to keep the Winchester Hospice as our charity for the next 12 months.

Turning to the state of the course, most agree that the greens have been really good this year but unfortunately the Rooks have again proved very destructive causing a lot of damage to our fairways. This is proving very costly and it remains a huge priority to find ways of reducing this problem.

Whilst we live in hope that progress will be made over the next year in containing COVID 19 there remains a realism that we will not be out the woods for a while to come.

Francis Sheath – Seniors Captain, November, 2020.