

# Tribute to squash legend

World-ranking squash event the Colin Payne Kent Open will be held on January 10-12 at the Tunbridge Wells Squash Club, in memory of the local and national sporting hero. Ahead of the event, we spoke to the club's **Roger Kent** about their involvement in wide-scale tournaments as well as the community, and their call for new members



**REFLECTED GLORY:** Tunbridge Wells Squash Club Chairman Mark Groves-Gidney (left) receives the Kent Open trophies from organiser Alan Thatcher (right)

## FIRSTLY, CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT TUNBRIDGE WELLS SQUASH CLUB?

We are a very successful squash and rackets club, tucked away here in Tunbridge Wells. We operate as a private members club and have three squash courts, an extensive and recently renovated bar, and an array of social activities that take place throughout the year.

We have an outstanding junior squash programme as well as individual coaching for players of all levels. In fact, our upcoming Open Day on the January 26 is designed to encourage new members to join us – complete beginners or people looking to get back into the sport.

We will be offering an exciting 15 per cent off all membership categories on the day.

## DO YOU OFFER DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP?

We do – there's a regular full membership, an off-peak daytime only option, a teenager's membership and one for children. We have some fantastic high level players, our oldest having been a member for 60 years, but we are also very keen to encourage the younger generations. It's great for children's hand-eye coordination.

We do a complete beginner's session on a Friday evening and a two-hour training session on Sundays for those who are really keen to make further progress in squash. Also, one of our coaches visits local schools in Kent to teach the sport – he visits Claremont, Skinners' Kent Academy, and Skippers Hill, to name but a few.

## TELL US ABOUT YOUR PRO TOURNAMENT...

Taking place in January, this will be the tenth year of the event, and this year it is named The Colin Payne Kent Open, sponsored by Select Gaming. It is named in memory of the late Colin Payne, as he tragically passed away last year.

Select Gaming, the sponsor, is owned by one of our members, Jonny Powell, and it was his idea to relocate the tournament from Maidstone to Tunbridge Wells Squash Club.

World ranked players from the top 50 to the top 150 will be here, and the prize money is at \$5,000. The tournament runs from January 10-12, and there will be junior coaching as well as a ladies' exhibition match. It's a great chance for players to get on the sponsorship ladder if they can do well and get noticed at the tournament.

## CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT COLIN PAYNE?

Colin Payne represented Tunbridge Wells for many years on the pro-circuit. He was county champion five times, won the Kent over-35 title ten times, and represented Kent on more than 100 occasions. He became the National Over-50 champion and represented England in international competition. He lost his life in tragic circumstances at the age of 54.

He is an inspiration for us, and I am sure that

Colin's many friends in the game will want to visit the tournament to pay their respects and enjoy some great squash.

## WHAT ELSE CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE TOURNAMENT?

The Kent Open is acknowledged as one of England's major tournaments for emerging squash professionals, and we will be celebrating its tenth anniversary with a new home at the club. Club sponsor G Collins and Sons Jewellers will also finance a Ladies professional challenge match during the tournament, and The Wells Physiotherapy & Sports Injury Clinic will be delivering support to the players.

## AS WELL AS THE BAR, DID YOU HAVE OTHER RENOVATIONS LAST YEAR?

We also had our changing rooms refurbished to a very high standard. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council helped us with the funding for the female changing room, which was fantastic.

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One of our other key local sponsors, JVIP, kindly provided us with some tiered seating which we can put up for tournament events. It can seat about 30 people which, as you can imagine, creates a great atmosphere for spectators. Being in the Kent, Sussex and Surrey catchment area, we can usually attract a good crowd. The squash community is like one big family – we all know each other and there's a real camaraderie between players and spectators.

## YOU SEEM TO BE A BIG PART OF THE TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMUNITY. DO YOU WORK CLOSELY WITH ANY OTHER BUSINESSES?

We have long been partners with The Spa Hotel, who are a fantastic sponsor of ours. And Thomas Mansfield. One of our other local sponsors, MyCourts, is a software/IT company run by one of our members, Miles Montelius, who has developed an online court booking, lighting control and payment system that is now used by over 100 clubs around the country.

One a final note, we would encourage everyone to come down for the tournament, and why not bring the family along to our Open Day?

**For more information on both events, visit [twsrc.co.uk](http://twsrc.co.uk)**



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