**Junior Academy 2023 report**

With over 60 juniors, our Club’s junior academy is now one of the largest in Kent. Open to all abilities, from complete beginner to nationally ranked juniors, our academy aims to provide affordable, inclusive and high-quality junior squash. I’m really pleased to report that our academy continues to perform very strongly.

* Our regular Friday and Sunday group coaching sessions continue to be extremely popular. Given this and the doubling of our junior membership we are now offering a free monthly Saturday session to cater for this increased demand.
* We continue to operate two junior teams that compete against other Kent clubs. Both our 1st team and our 2nd team are competing strongly in their divisions. We are particularly proud to have put out a junior all-female squash team reflecting our strength in junior girls membership. Our Girl’s 1st team played Bromley in March 23 as part of the England Squash ‘rallying together’ initiative and performed really well.
* We continue to support England Squash’s Squash stars programme that aims to widen participation amongst 5 to 9 year olds. In our next intake (October 23) is full and we will look forward to welcoming 10 new juniors to our sport and the club!
* We also support Kent’s junior development pathway and host the West Kent box leagues giving not just our juniors, but all juniors of all abilities, the opportunity to play competitively against similar standard players.
* In the next 12 months, in honour of the late Mary Scott-Miller who did so much for junior development and our club, we will be holding our first junior tournament.

We also continue to develop some very talented junior squash players who have achieved some amazing success: -

* Three of our juniors were selected to represent Kent in the April Intercounty Championship finals in Birmingham. Joseph Smith helped the boys u11 team finish 8th while Tom Wainwright and Abhi Asthana helped the boys u13 team win the National Intercounty plate title!
* Many of our juniors are now competing in England Squash sanctioned tournaments testing themselves against nationally ranked juniors. Highlights include Abby Bradshaw (England GU11 highest ranking no 27) finishing runner up in the Girls u11 Bromley Challenger event while Abhi Asthana (England BU13 highest ranking no 23) finished 30th in the England Junior National Championships.
* Our juniors are not just competing domestically. One of our juniors is now competing on the international stage! Tom Wainwright recently competed in a number of European national championships including the prestigious Junior Dutch Open where he finished a very credible 38th place. He also achieved a 5th place result in the 2023 Croatian National Junior Open Championships in Zagreb. These brilliant results have propelled him into the European top 40 at boys u13 level achieving a career high ranking of European no 35 at boys u13 level. He also finished as England no 29 at U13 level after competing in three national silver standard tournaments.
* In the most recent 2023 Kent closed, our juniors performed well with **Theo Adoki** winning the u13 plate final (3rd position.) **Tom Wainwright and Abhi Asthana** finished 5th and 9th respectively in their first ever u15 tournament. Theo has since been selected for Kent boys u13 in the Intercounty qualifying tournament.

Congratulations to the above and indeed **all our fantastic juniors who have made such great progress**! A big thank you also to our brilliant coaches (Nick, Zeb, Milan and Phoebe) and parent volunteers too who have provided much support to me in the last 12 months. Thank you also to the Committee for all their support and good steer.

Declan Wainwright (Junior Committee lead and Safeguarding Officer)