

GHA AGM

Schools Competitions Report - 2022/23

SUMMARY

We have completed another year of schools tournaments which seemed to be enjoyed by all. The tournaments ran well with the girls tournaments once again being more popular than the boys which was not a surprise. A summary of competition winners & runners up including past years can be found in the attached document.

HIGHS & LOWS

We have seen fewer entries in the girls competitions at older age groups but a slightly higher participation at the In2Hockey level. It was great to see Balcarras taking a place in two separate regional competitions and we have also welcomed a new school (Leckhampton) into the competitions

Very low entries in the boys categories meant that in the older age group categories there was just one triangular tournament (U14 Tier 1) which seems a shame. Several last minute withdrawals also caused great frustration and in one age sector this meant we could no longer run a tournament. A recurrent theme when I questioned schools regarding late cancellations was that senior management were not giving permission for the pupils to miss lesson time.

Schools self-selecting into which tier they enter continues to be controversial and I will be reminding schools of the criteria for each category when I correspond with them this term. GHA have had a number of requests for funding to help with the costs of moving on from County tournaments to the regional rounds and beyond. Along with other funding requests this has led to the committee setting out a new Funding Policy to ensure consistency in the future should there be an increase in such requests.

On a more positive note, the feedback from the tournaments that did run was very positive. We have welcomed some new umpires to the tournaments this year and they have provided great support to schools who do not have the resource to send additional members of staff to the tournaments. In the past umpires have provided their services free of charge but with the increasing cost of living many are now looking to cover their costs at least and so this has increased the overall running costs of the tournaments. Generally the cost of running tournaments greatly outweighs the income as our entry fees remain relatively low and to set them high enough to yield a break-even point would be prohibitively high. However, the opportunity for the schools that do not have full hockey programmes is particularly invaluable and the teachers often comment at the end of a day how the children have benefitted from playing multiple games over a short period of time.

England Hockey have announced a number of changes for next season to include:

1. Indoor Schools Hockey

West Hockey Association will take ownership of indoor hockey for schools and offer open competitions with England Hockey finals on taking place in early December. This past season we had no indoor representative at GHA to organise tournaments and so the schools worked together to organise and deliver tournaments themselves once I had provided a list of schools that were interested.

2. U14 Tier 1 for both boys and girls will now be led by England Hockey as a knockout competition with early losers going into a Tier 2 Plate competition as per the current U16 offering. Therefore the County offering at this age group will now become U14 Tier 3.

MOVING FORWARD

Looking ahead to next season, I am in the early stage of setting tournament dates and have been in touch with the hosting venues. It is increasingly difficult to diarise these events with an ever reducing window in the England Hockey calendar and other events to consider including IAPS dates and county netball tournament dates. When I do send out the entry forms I will be asking schools for feedback on the current provision and asking why some schools have stopped entering the county tournaments to see if there is anything we can do to increase participation.

In late March I attended a County Network meeting, run by England Hockey, on the topic of School Engagement and Competitions within the County. During the meeting I felt more than ever that England Hockey are looking for volunteers to become more involved. I have concluded that there is a need for someone who has more time to devote to conversations with schools and I unfortunately am unable to commit to this. After consideration, and taking into account numerous factors, I have decided that the forthcoming 2023/24 season will be my last organising school tournaments for GHA. I have really enjoyed stepping in to help following Angie Atherton's forced retirement and have appreciated greatly the support from many people including Committee members, teachers & umpires. I would particularly like to thank Ian and Shaun who have always been on hand to offer direction on all things hockey and feedback on baked goods! So on that note, should anyone be thinking they would like to get involved (or knows of anyone that would) and they have time on their hands, perhaps you might suggest them to get in touch with me and I can talk them through what is involved. Hopefully, having a full year to find someone will allow plenty of time to have a thorough and smooth hand over.

Lisa Lundie
May 8th 2023