



The Wanderers Squash Club

Chairman's Report for 2020

**Presented at the Wanderers Squash Club AGM
on Monday 25 October 2020**

The Treasurer's report, indicating a healthy accumulated surplus of funds for year ending February 2020, reflects the general optimism that the Squash Club had at that time for the year ahead. Nobody could have guessed at the devastating effect the Covid-19 lockdown would have over the remainder of the year.

In March of this year the first round of Joburg Masters League had already been played. Teams for the Joburg League had been chosen. We were looking forward to seeing how our newly promoted 8th League team would perform at 7th League level. And we were highly excited at entering an additional, eighth team into the Joburg League at 8th League level – a team comprised wholly of Development Squash players.

Despite the commencement of Lockdown Level 5 at the end of March and ongoing restrictions to the playing of sports at Level 4 in May, we were still optimistic that we could somehow complete a league season before year-end. However, by Lockdown Level 3 in June it was clear that it was going to be an uphill battle simply to re-open the courts.

Fortunately, due to a strong and sustained drive by Squash SA, Joburg Squash and Joburg Masters to motivate an early return to the sport, the Department of Sports & Recreation allowed the re-opening of certain clubs in July subject to strict adherence to Squash SA's playing protocols. Wanderers Squash Club was one of the first clubs to allow professional squash players on court in Phase 1 of Squash SA's RTP (return-to-play) plan. This was followed by accredited coaches and league players in Phases 2 & 3.

On 15 August 2020, as the country's restrictions relaxed further into Level 2, Phase 4 of the RTP plan kicked-in and club members and visiting league players were allowed access to the courts.

Joburg League commenced on Tuesday 18 August and Joburg Masters returned to play shortly afterwards.

Lockdown Level 1 commenced on 21 September by which time a steady increase in the number of players on court had taken place. Unfortunately, there was still a strict limit on visiting players and this has hit the club financially. The significant drop in income from visitor fees and sponsorship meant that the ongoing expenditure on Court Management was unsustainable for the foreseeable future. The committee would like to thank those companies and institutions that continued their support during the lockdown.



The uncertainty of the pandemic also meant that membership renewals were slow on the uptake. However, with the re-opening of the courts, paid-up membership is now up to 154 with 42 still outstanding. Payment of the outstanding amounts and early membership renewals in the new year will provide the committee with the necessary confidence to re-vamp the court management systems and facilities for the club members.

It is with regret that Gary Plumstead, the Court Manager, gave notice in August that he would be terminating his duties at the squash club. This has put a severe strain on the committee's ability to administer the courts and it is important that the new committee for 2021 puts its mind to developing a sustainable strategy for the coming year.

We are going into the new year with a healthy accumulated surplus of funds thanks to prudent and timely curtailment of expenditure during lockdown. This will provide an important cushion for expenditure at the start of next season. However, a strategy will need to be developed for ongoing court management plus the raising of funds (primarily from court sponsorship and visitors) to provide at least a neutral cash flow throughout the year.

Recognition of Individuals

Club Awards

In recognition of club members who have made an impact on the playing scene this year, I would like to announce the following awards.

Team of the Year - Wanderers WN05 8th/9th Joburg League team, for coming first in the league with a 90% points score. The team comprised Graham West, Martin Cowper, Fabio Lorregian and the Development players.

Most Improved - The most improved player award is given to the junior Thusong Development team of Ashley Modiba, Bongani Machava, Bandile Machava, Johnny Mogala and David Machava. Five years of weekly training at The Wanderers Squash Club has culminated in them holding their own against our 7th, 8th and 9th League players and winning all their matches in this season's Joburg League.

Member of the Year - In addition to being a member of the squash club, **Gary Plumstead** has been a part-time employee of The Wanderers in his role as Court Manager for the past eight years. Apart from his function of managing the courts, he has also contributed a lot of his free time to benefit the club and its members. This includes arranging tournaments, league and social events, issuing notices on social media, involvement in the squash club's committee and playing for the Wanderers' Reserve League. Gary is a valuable member of The Wanderers squash club and we hope he will continue his membership in the new season.

Club Champion - The Club Championship tournament was delayed this year due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Matches are due to start on 27 October 2020 after which we'll find out if Bruce Young is able to retain his title from 2019.

Joburg League Results 2020

The Joburg League (previously Gauteng League) season was a relatively subdued affair this year due to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 legislation. A down-sized league was held throughout September/October comprising 6 league levels with a reduced number of teams playing only one round.

The lockdown was a great disappointment for our league players, not least because our 8th League winners (WN04) from last year had been scheduled to play in 7th League this year. Also, we had planned to enter a full Development team into 8th League comprising five of the top players from Thusong Squash Development. These boys, from Alexandra township, have been training since 2015 and their entry into the Joburg League as a team would have been the culmination of their achievements.

As it turned out, we managed to include at least one of the Thusong players in each of our 8th League matches and I am pleased to say that each of the five boys won all their games.

Joburg League

1 st League	(8 teams)	<i>(No Wanderers team)</i>
Res League	(7 teams)	WN01 in 3 rd position.
2 nd /3 rd League	(8 teams)	WN02 in 7 th position.
4 th /5 th League	(9 teams)	WN03 in 8 th position.
6 th /7 th League	(8 teams)	<i>(No Wanderers team)</i>
8 th /9 th League	(7 teams)	WN05 finished in 1 st position.

Masters League

2 nd League	(6 teams)	Wanderers A in 2 nd position.
“	“	Wanderers B in 4 th position.
4 th League	(5 teams)	Wanderers C in 2 nd position

I'd like to thank Phil Louw and Keith Willows for continuing to manage the Gauteng League teams Masters teams respectively.

Tournaments

The following tournaments were held at The Wanderers Squash Club since October 2019:

- The Planet Fitness Fourways challenge was hosted at The Wanderers on Wednesday 6 November 2019 with Planet Fitness winning by two games out of the 30 matches played.
- The Dave Grant Doubles tournament was held on 16 November 2019. This was won by Bruce Young & Ganesh Shenoy with Francois v/d Merwe & Dino Petrarola taking the "Century" award. Chris Hughes & Mish Wentzel were recognised as the oldest doubles pair in the "Century" category.
- The annual Movember tournament was held on 29/30 November 2019 raising R1000 for the Men's Foundation in aid of cancer research. Six teams entered, playing a round-robin format. The team comprising Nhlanhla Maseko, Allan Lai, Bongani Machava and Gary Plumstead won the tournament.
- A Wanderers Squash Club Pre-Season Open tournament was held on 14 March 2020 attracting 16 players.
- A Blitz League was held in February and March of this year to rank players for the planned Joburg League year. This comprised 30 players playing in five seeded groups of six.
- The annual Wanderers / Chamber Challenge was held at Chamber Exiles on World Squash Day, Saturday 10 October. After a hard-fought tournament, Chamber won 27 games to 24, taking the cup back from The Wanderers Squash Club for the third time out of the tournament's eight match history.

Tournaments still on the calendar for this year are:

- Wanderers Squash Club Championships commence on Tuesday 27 October 2020.
- Other tournaments are still to be advised.

Advertising, Court Sponsorship and Accessibility

Advertising & Sponsorship

We are continually striving to advertise the facilities of the club and our activities to increase much needed membership, sponsorship and hire of the courts.

Gary continues to do a sterling job broadcasting news on WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Web pages and emails. We extended the weekly social Sunday afternoon sessions to include free access to visitors on the last day of the month. This is to encourage new members and introduce novices to the game of squash.

Understandably, companies were reluctant to sponsor courts this year. However, The Aviator Hotel continued their support on Court 4 and we are extremely grateful to Nick Constas for this.

Court Accessibility

The online GoBook system for remote booking of courts by members is functioning well. However, there have been some occasions when the network goes down at the squash courts which is a cause of great inconvenience. The main club is attending to the problem in order to make it more robust.

Members may also top-up their court booking credit via GoBook to enable them to play with visitors. This avoids the need for an attendant to be at the court office to receive cash payment from a visitor. Outside visitors playing alone, however, still need to make arrangements with a Committee member for payment and access to the courts.

Other Wanderers sub-club members are able to register their membership cards on the SquashCon computer system and play as visitors, provided they have credit on the booking system. They will be charged at the same rate as visitors but will have the benefit of freedom of access to the courts with their membership cards.

Court Maintenance

The cracked plaster on court 4 was repaired once lockdown restrictions were relaxed in June. Leaks from the roof above courts 5, 6 & 7 are an occasional problem, especially after a heavy downpour. However, the more regular leaks have now been stopped, especially since a cooking pot was discovered lodged in a roof gully, causing a damming-up of water between the rooves!

Squash Development Programme

The weekly Thusong Squash Development coaching was terminated at the end of March due to the lockdown. This will recommence once The Wanderers Club is once again fully open to visitors.

In the meantime we have received sponsorship money from Worley for the hire of the courts for Development training and this will carry over to next year to cover the use of the courts.

Conclusion

On behalf of the committee I wish to thank all the members for their support and I wish the committee and the club the best of success in 2021.

Chris Hughes,
Chairman, Wanderers Squash Club.