

Women's Squash against Cancer - Fiona McLeod Tournament Essex Ladies, 14th June 2009

On Sunday 14th June, a Ladies Handicapped Squash Tournament was held at Epping Sports Centre in memory of Fiona McLeod to raise money for Cancer Research.

Fiona was a leading light of the Squash Club, playing for the Ladies 1st team for several very successful seasons in the Essex Leagues. She helped with regular squash training sessions for the lower teams, which improved fitness and skills, as well as being great fun. Fiona was very supportive to squash players at all levels, her catchphrase being "positive mental attitude". 14th June would have been her 47th birthday.

24 players entered the tournament, spanning a vast range of abilities, with handicaps ranging from -20 to +20. The age range was also extensive, with 80 year old Hazel Marsh, ex-World over 70 Ladies Champion, and 16 year old Lucy Tetlow at either end of the spectrum. Epping, Dragons, Woodford Wells, Redbridge, Connaught and Met Police Clubs were all represented in the competition, with supporters coming from as far away as ECC, Chelmsford.

Players were divided into 4 groups, playing one game up to 25 PAR against the other 5 in their group. The winner of each group progressed to the semi-finals and these were extremely close and very exciting. In the first semi-final, Katie Hancock beat Jan McColl 25-24 and in the second it was 25-23 for Tracy Farr against Colleen Campbell. After 6 tough matches, the finalists were clearly tired, but managed to put on a thrilling spectacle with Katie winning 25-24 in a wonderful display of squash.

All the matches were played in a great spirit and were exciting and entertaining to watch. As well as some great squash and a lot of fun, the event raised over £750 for Cancer Research UK, though entry fees, donations, greetings card and cake sales and a raffle. The courts were kindly provided by SLM free of charge, and donations were received from several local businesses, as well as many of the ladies from Essex squash. The top prize was a personal coaching session with ex-World Champion, Peter Nichol, won by the event organiser. A special award was presented to Hazel Marsh, for all her encouragement to women squash players. Hazel has nurtured many new squash players, young and not so young, and introduced them to team squash. She has been an inspiration to us all and had the crowd cheering in her tournament games.

Once the matches were over, players relaxed over a bite to eat. A Squash rules quiz was organised by Sue Woodhouse who had also generously provided her marking and refereeing expertise to the semis and final. The tournament was a great success, thanks to the contributions and support of many and we hope to repeat the event next year.

Fiona would have been delighted.

Carey Adams
15 June 2009