

West of Scotland Disability Tennis Report 2020

The disability programme started off in 2020 very positively. On 16th February, a Disability presentation was held at the Tennis Scotland Coaches Conference at Gleneagles. Andrew Raitt talked about 'Opening up your venues' and Karen Ross presented a power point presentation on 'Providing examples of best practise and dispelling myths', which was accompanied on court with Lesley Whitehead supporting some of our top players through a selection of drills. West of Scotland and Glasgow Disability Tennis (GDT) members took part. LD players Ronan Cacace and Aidan Moody and wheelchair players Lee Aitchison, Melanie Woods and Ellie Robertson showcased their standard of tennis to the 70 coaches present.

Although coaching began in January, like all clubs and venues, in the middle of March this was cut short with the outbreak of Covid-19 and the closure of facilities. The sessions have continued to be disrupted throughout the rest of this year although when restrictions have allowed, some coaching has taken place on outdoor courts.

When coaching was not possible, GDT kept in touch with their members by providing videos, links, information and ideas on how to keep fit and active during the lockdown months. Some of these were also shared on social media by the LTA, Tennis Scotland, Special Olympics Great Britain (SOGB) and Virtus World Intellectual Impairment Sport.

GDT had 8 players and coaches selected to represent Special Olympics Scotland West at the SOGB National Games. The event which was due to be held in Liverpool in 2021 has now been cancelled due to covid-19 and it is hoped a new venue and date will be announced sometime this year. All the team has been keeping in touch, building team moral via WhatsApp during lockdown. They have been set challenges to keep fit and active and each have shared videos of themselves doing a variety of tennis skills.

On the competitions side, 2020 was going to be a busy year. GDT organised three LTA Regional Series Tournaments, learning disability, wheelchair and visually impaired all of which had to be cancelled due to the restrictions.

In addition GDT were looking to expand the number of competitions by organising a Disability Mini Series of one day Recreational Tournaments for LD, wheelchair and VI players. The objective was to provide more local match play opportunities in Scotland, attracting those who are new to competition as well as providing additional competition for our more experienced players. Events were booked for June and November but these were also cancelled. Plans are already in place to start this new set of recreational competitions in 2021.

For the players who play at red and orange ball level, the LD Recreational Leagues have been a great success. GDT set this initiative up in 2017 to provide four events per year linked to the LTA Team Challenge. These events provide lower ability players the opportunity to learn about match play and play short timed matches in a fun and informal environment against players of a similar ability. The leagues are open to venues running an LD programme in the West of Scotland but teams are also keen to travel from Edinburgh, Stirling, Prestwick and the Dumfries and Galloway to play. This year four dates and venues were booked but none of them were able to take place. It is hoped that the leagues will be able to re-start from April of this year.

All the LTA National Disability Tournaments also succumbed to the local restrictions in place.

On a final positive note, Ellie Robertson was selected as one of the 12 high potential players for the LTA Wheelchair National Age Group Programme. This brings the total number of players from the West of Scotland on LTA Programmes to four:

LD GB Squad	– Aidan Moody and Ronan Cacace
Wheelchair National Age Group	– Ellie Robertson
VI extended squad	– Andrea Logan

All players train with GDT.

For more information about the opportunities Glasgow Disability Tennis provides or for Virtus World Intellectual Impairment Sport contact Lesley Whitehead at Lesley.whitehead@ymail.com