

SSLTC Newsletter



Spring Issue, 2026

www.ssltc.co.uk



@StonyTennisClub

Welcome

Welcome

Stony is thriving. Currently we have the highest membership numbers at 521, with court utilisation around 90% through much of weekday peak, more members being coached with the highest number of adults on record, and more people attending club socials since the 90s. We have just come off the most successful LTA Grade 3 tournament at the club with 300 entries and over 1,200 through the club gates during the course of the week. It is great to see so many people getting out there and playing tennis and making use of the great facilities that we have.



Scan to read on your device

But with that popularity comes a few pressures.

Between the peak hours of 5-7pm weekdays, our court utilisation is around 90% (75% in winter). It remains high at 80% through to 8pm (60% in winter), before dropping off sharply. After 8pm 50% of the courts are unused falling to 80% unused after 9pm.

Contributing to the pressure are club activities with member coaching starting at 4pm for the youngest through to older teenagers and adults by 7pm. We have the highest ever roster of adult members being coached at present. There is also adult clubnight on Wednesdays and the juniors on Thursday, and with summer beginning our Milton Keynes Tennis league matches also start weekday evenings. With less than 50 weekday members, the vast majority are eligible to play after 5pm. Whilst individual member bookings are still possible (30% of bookings are by individual members in weekday peak), it requires a bit of planning within the two week booking window, and expecting to find a free un-booked court on the spur of the moment is harder than finding hen's teeth.

This is all a far cry from the mid noughties when apart from a few hours, courts were empty for much of the day. The committee at the time embarked on a plan to target membership and boost the popularity of the club. Better to have a problem of a busy club than one empty for much of the week.

Changes.....

And so to a few changes that are going to be put in place. There are some practical things that can be done to try and alleviate this pressure, free up court time and put a check on the runaway growth in membership.

1. Close membership – effective 1st June, online enrolment to join our club will be closed and we will operate a wait list. We are putting a forward date on this to give those members that are late on their renewals a chance to make amends if they choose. There are around 30 members overdue. After 1st June, those who fail to renew on time, will not automatically remain a member, but will go to the bottom of the wait list. A joining/renewal link will then be released to people in turn as spaces become available. The committee may choose to release spaces for non-peak members sooner, where that makes sense.
2. Clubnights: Junior Thursday evening court bookings have been reduced to bring the number of courts in line with Adult Wednesday nights and the numbers attending. This has freed up several hours on two courts for individual member play. Junior clubnight will operate on 5 courts from 4pm to 6pm on Thursdays and Adult from 6:30 pm on 5 courts and from 7:30pm on 7 courts on Wednesdays.
3. Court bookings: several initiatives have been put in place. Firstly, you may have noticed that you now need to specify who your playing partners are when making a booking. This will help us identify court usage by member more accurately, the balance of singles vs doubles, and enable us to ensure private coaching doesn't exceed their cap. Whilst we are not preventing singles during peak times, please if you can play your singles game outside of peak, then we would appreciate it. Singles obviously halves the capacity of our courts.
4. Hanging bookings: we have done a clean-up of stranded half hour bookings that sometimes get left between club events, coaching, matches etc and often get left unbooked as a result. As hour slots they should be more accessible.
5. Cancelling courts: please cancel a court if you don't intend to use it, have missed your train or are stuck in traffic. There is nothing more frustrating for members that haven't been able to book a court, only to be told there were a few empty. This goes for both coaches and members.
6. Ball Machine – use of the ball machine (one person on a court) in peak times between 5 and 8pm weekdays is no longer permitted.
7. New off peak: Weekdays from 8pm to 10pm is now considered off peak. Whilst this has no impact right now, when the bubble is re-erected in October, the cost of hire will reduce from £8 per hour to £5 per hour after 8pm. A secondary change will take a little longer to implement, but we intend as soon as is possible, to reduce the floodlight fee after 8pm to £5. We cannot operate two prices for floodlights on the current contactless system so this will have to wait until we implement LED lighting and connect our lights to the booking system. If we can find a way to do this sooner, we will.

Collectively we hope this will start to alleviate some of the pressure

In other news.....

Safeguarding

The LTA Safeguarding officer, Melissa Miller, visited SSLTC on 29th April for a review of our welfare policies and procedures, and tour of the club, to ensure we are meeting all the standards expected by the LTA. Thank you for all those of you that completed the survey in advance of her visit. Whilst we are waiting to get the final report, the verbal feedback on the day was that we will pass with flying colours. There is a lot of work to ensure that Stony is a safe environment for all our members and visitors, and a special thanks for our Welfare Officer, Teresa O'Mahony and Head of Coaching, John Cavill, for making this a reality. We of course remain ever vigilant and if you need to raise something then please either contact Teresa, email ssltcsafeguarding@gmail.com, follow the process detailed on our safeguarding noticeboard or in the !StonyMark handbook in the club.

Club Championships and Finals

There are just a few more days to enter this year's club championships with finals taking place on Sunday 6th September. Sign up on the noticeboard in the clubhouse. At the time of writing we still need more entries, primarily for the Ladies' events. Draws will be done around 15th May. Finals Day will feature a BBQ and bar to keep the supporting crowds happy.

American Tournaments (Beer and Prosecco)

The first of the season's American tournaments was held on Bank Holiday 4th May with a Mixed event. All being well there will be another arranged for Saturday 13th June, and on Saturday 11th July to coincide with both the Wimbledon Finals weekend and the now famous Beer and Prosecco Festival at the Cricket Club. More information to follow by email, but please put the dates in your diaries. Many thanks to Arun Balaraman as event organiser.

Capital projects (LED, Court maintenance)

We continue to quietly make improvements to our club and its facilities. Hopefully you have all noticed the perimeter netting to Courts 6&7 has been replaced in the past month. There is a long list of items we are slowly ticking off all subject to volunteer workforce. Neil our groundsman retired last month and we are very grateful for all his work. Welcome Charley our new groundsman who started on the 1st May. The courts were all brushed by Fosse as part of an annual maintenance programme, but you can of course all help with

brushing the artificial clay courts after each use. Using the new brushes, please work from the outside of the court inwards in an ever decreasing circular motion.

The main capital project on the horizon is to convert our halogen floodlamps to LED. We have quotes and plan to fund around 50% of this with a grant, which will require our new lease to be in place first. LED lighting will enable to switch lights on and off without the lamps cooling down, implement a tiered pricing system and connect the lights to our booking system. Whilst it will of course save some electricity, the capital investment makes this a very long return on the investment, so this project is more about convenience and usability. If we get the lease signed in 2026, we will aim to complete this project in 2027.

Quiz Night

Quiz night is set for Friday 23rd October with a Fish and Chip supper at the clubhouse. See Jan Taylor for tickets (janetgoose@aol.com).

Social tennis rollups

For the newer members still settling into the club, social tennis rollups continue to be very popular and a great way to meet members. They are held on Wednesday mornings from 09:00 to 12:00, Wednesday evenings from 18:30 to late, Thursday evenings for juniors from 16:00 to 18:00 and on Sunday mornings from 10:00 to 12:00. We thank Phyllis Leete for her stalwart support of Wednesday mornings and Teresa O'Mahony for Wednesday evenings. If you wish to join, please introduce yourselves to Phyllis and Teresa.

AGM

The club AGM will be held on Thursday 25th June at 19:30. Notices and an Agenda will be published closer to the day.

Any questions or comments, please let us know at admin@ssltc.co.uk