**Back to Squash at the Grafton**

Following the recent announcement by the government that indoor sports facilities can reopen from **Saturday 25th July** we are pleased to be able to confirm that our squash courts will once again be available. Squash England has issued some guidelines that we MUST stick to. They can be found at https://www.englandsquash.com/backtosquash. Below is a summary.

**The courts are ONLY open to members and MUST be pre-booked.** Squash membership is available, so if you know non-members that want to play then please point them in the direction of our membership forms.

**Squash England has allowed the following activities ONLY;**

1. Games between two players from the same household or social bubble

2. Individual practice

3. Squash lesson with a qualified Squash England coach

4. Two players to do drills with each player staying on one side or part (front-back) of the court, with only one player handling the ball to start the rally

**It is frustrating that we cannot immediately commence playing competitive games but we must stick with these activities and if members do not then the Committee will consider closing the facilities again.**

Most of the other guidelines are quite obvious in this COVID world. Please bring your own water (ideally in a labelled bottle) and a towel (to wipe down sweat). You must arrive at the court already changed and ready to play. Always sanitise your hands on arrival and take all of your equipment onto court with you. You must stay on court for your entire playing period. **Please do NOT wipe your hands on the walls of the courts or sit on the floor whilst having a break**. Minimise contact with surfaces in the court building and be mindful of other players especially when in the corridor. **The balcony is off limits to non-coaching staff other than at the start of the session to open windows for ventilation if necessary (see below)**. The clubhouse is accessible but the showers and changing facilities will not be.

Ventilation is a key part of our strategy and the more we can simulate an external environment the better. The following steps should be followed:

1. All windows to be left partially opened (approx 15cm) from the start of the session

2. Front door to be propped open from the start of the first session

3. A minimum of 15 minutes of free air movement must be left between consecutive sessions

4. Squash court doors to be left/propped open during the 15 minute ventilation period and all players must have left the squash building

5. The ventilation fans should not be adjusted or switched off -- these are set to optimise humidity activation and air changes

To provide space for these ventilation periods, all games will start on the hour and last a maximum of 45 minutes; every 4th session, at 45 minutes past the hour, will be blocked out, so that you only need to take note of the first 2 numbers of your booked slot. This is illustrated in the table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Time on booking system** | **Actual time to play** |
| 1600 | 1600 |
| 1645 | Blocked |
| 1730 | 1700 |
| 1815 | 1800 |
| 1900 | 1900 |
| 1945 | Blocked |
| 2030 | 2000 |
| 2115 | 2100 |
| 2200 | 2200 |

As you are hopefully aware, the club has agreed to extended memberships for the period when the courts were unavailable. This offer supersedes the free lights offer, but is a gesture of good will and to get players back on court. **Lights will be FREE until Monday 3rd August.** To enable this, a lights key will be left likely in the lights machines, or somewhere equally obvious. This must not go missing otherwise we will not be able to continue offering this service. The light key must be sanitised before and after it has been used.

**Single player practice**

Harry Parkes has drawn up guidelines on how best to carry out single player practice (posted on the noticeboard). There are also some really good videos on YouTube. It’s a really good thing to do and, if done properly, can lead to much enhanced technique and ball-racket control. It’s also hard work if you do it properly. We suggest using a single dot ball is best, it’s faster and better replicates a real game. Splitting sessions into 5 minute chunks and having a short rest between them helps with focus and concentration and enables the best outcomes. Harry has some new single yellow dot balls available for £2.50 per ball.

**Sides and Front-Back play**

For obvious reasons, Squash England has called having two players in the court, one on each side, as “Sides”. There is a video on their website explaining what they mean. You can play a game (for points) hitting crosscourt every shot or do classic coaching drills such as the well-known boast drive (one player at the back the other at the front). These can be played for points as well.

**Coaching**

Graeme Hogarth and Harry Parkes will both offer 1:1 coaching sessions at reduced rates of £15 per 45 min session. If you are interested then please contact them individually. (graeme.hogarth@kcl.ac.uk; hgparkes1@gmail.com)

**Fitness and Stretching**

While I am sure that some of you will have kept super-fit over the break, others may not have. Squash is hard on the body and muscles that you don’t normally used can take a battering. Please try and stretch out before and after play, ideally building up some muscle and tendon strength BEFORE you go back on court.