

29 October 2018

Introduction

2018 turned out to be an exceptionally successful year for NJSA and it was thanks to a tremendous effort by our players, supported by their parents and coaches.

Not only did we dominate the IPT's but we had the most players in the SA top 10 that we've had in a long time. This despite the fact that we had far fewer players registered with NJSA – 174 as opposed to 210 in 2017. This area is where we need the most improvement, namely growing the game.

Our committee once again did an outstanding job. Many hands make light work. A big thank you to the dedicated team of Brett Cousins, Chris and Jana Lessing, Gerhard Naude, Musa Malinga, Saartjie Cromhout, Hennie van Eck and Maryna Fourie.

General

In 2018 our aim was to improve the squash in the province by getting more players on court more often... The serious fun tournaments were introduced to create a pressure free environment for competitive squash, we introduced the concept of hosting during our tournaments to encourage more players from other provinces to compete against our own and we introduced a new high schools league format that works better for the times.

At the end of the season we reviewed our policies and made adjustments where we thought it necessary. There is always room for improvement and we welcome any suggestions from the squash community in this regard.

For 2019 specific action steps will be taken in conjunction with the NSA and the NSF to help our players to improve their marking & refereeing.

Events

The NJSA activities follow the national squash calendar. This year the events and highlights were as follows – events arranged by NJSA as well as events where NJSA players participated.

1. NJSA Round Robin Open tournament in January

- 140 entries, including 34 from other provinces
2. FNB Invitation Festival Boys' schools teams (by invitation only) in February
 - Pretoria Boys High, St. Albans & Menlo Park from Northerns
 3. St. Mary's DSG Girls' schools teams Invitation festival in February
 - St. Mary's DSG and Menlo Park from Northerns
 4. U11-U19 Bloemfontein Open SA Schools Qualifier in February – top 3 positions:
 - Bu19 - Murray Schepers 1st
 - Bu16 - Damian Groenewald 3rd; B-section: Jesse Lessing 3rd
 - Gu16 - B-section: Jana Craig 1st, Claudia Lock 2nd, Eulali Mouton 3rd
 - Bu14 - Brett Mclachlan 1st, Luhann Groenewald 2nd; B-section: Lance Siegrist 2nd
 - Gu11 - Elzandri Janse van Rensburg 2nd
 - Bu11 - Ruhan van Eck 1st
 5. U11-U19 Northerns Open Graded tournament in March
 - 127 entries, including 16 from other provinces
 6. U14, U16 & U19 SA Schools Closed Qualifier in March – top 10:
 - Bu19 - Mikael Clayton 1st, Reece Mclachlan 3rd, Zian de Swardt 4th
 - Bu16 - Damian Groenewald 4th, Gareth Craigen 6th
 - Bu14 - Brett Mclachlan 1st, Jarrod Cousins 4th, Hubert van Eck 5th, Luhann Groenewald 7th
 - Gu19 - Helena Coetzee 4th
 - Gu16 - Valme Webster 8th, Awande Malinga 9th, Jeanemie Vorster 10th
 - Gu14 - Deneil Beukes 3rd, Ashton Weir 6th
 7. SA Country Schools Festival from end April to early May
 - 5 teams went to play – our C and D teams against smaller provinces' A & B teams
 - It's important to note that 11 players who played in the CSF then played in the IPT. The development value of the CSF can't be overstated.
 8. NJSA High Schools league
 - 70 teams participated in a modified format where age groups were discontinued and schools entered teams based on strength only, not age. More than 280 players were involved.
 - It was good to have Pretoria Boys High back in the league after a year of (almost complete) absence.
 - Administration of the league proved to be a challenge since it's the first time ever that the league was run on the Northerns admin system. Once the teething problems are sorted out it will run a lot smoother. This year all the players had to be registered on the system for the first time but next year only new players will have to be added.
 - The results are available on the admin website at <http://admin.northerns.co.za/njsa/standings.php>.
 9. NJSA Closed in May – final event before IPTs

- 142 entries, all Northerns players
- Over 400 matches played

10. Angela Difford u11 Festival was hosted in George

- NJSA sent a girls team and 3 boys teams

11. Junior IPTs

- 13 teams entered
- 3 gold medals for boys u14, u16 and u19
- 2 silver medals
- 4 bronze medals
- 9 medals was a fantastic performance
- If there was a points system NJSA would likely have won the overall IPT

12. Northerns Top Schools play-offs and National Top Schools

- Northerns Boys section won by St. Alban's College, finishing 6th in the national competition
- Northerns Girls section won by Midstream, finishing 4th in the national competition

13. Start of Season tournament in September

- 133 entries including 13 from Botswana and 11 from other provinces

14. Primary schools league

- 15 girls teams entered – a very encouraging improvement from only 9 teams last year
- 20 boys teams played

15. Stayers Festival in Cape Town in October

- PBHS, Menlo Park & St. Alban's participated

Top performances

The following 14 NJSA players were placed in the SA Schools Top 10 rankings (against 10 in 2017):

Age	Nr	Boys
u14	1	Brett McLachlan
	4	Luhann Groenewald
	6	Hubert van Eck
	9	Jarrood Cousins
u16	3	Damian Groenewald
	7	Gareth Craigen
u19	1	Mikael Clayton
	4	Reece Mclachlan
	8	Zian de Swardt
Age	Nr	Girls
u14	3	Deneil Beukes

	9	Ashton Weir
u16	8	Valmé Webster
	9	Awande Malinga
u19	5	Helena Coetzee

Mikael Clayton, Murray Schepers (also top 10 on the Squash SA rankings) and Helena Coetzee were selected by Squash SA to represent South Africa at the Junior World Championships in Chennai, India in July. Mikael and Murray played in the individual event where SA came 19th and the Junior Men's team event, whereas Helena played in the individual event and came 28th.

Damian Groenewald, Brett McLachlan and Deneil Beukes were invited on the u14 & u16 tour to Malaysia, arranged by SA Schools Squash.

Administration & other

1. Tournaments

This statement from my 2017 Chairman's report can be repeated verbatim this year: The tournaments are being run on a very professional basis by Brett Cousins and his team of court stewards. Organisation and communication is of a very high standard with matches taking place on schedule. Court stewards are working on the marking & refereeing of the players by assisting them courtside.

2. Clothing

We are happy to report that this year the IPT clothing order processes went off without any of the problems that we used to have in the past. Again a word of thanks to Jana Lessing for her tireless efforts in this regard.

3. Capping ceremony, awards function & AGM

The IPT capping ceremony is one of the highlights of the year and this year was no exception. The committee decided to have awards function in the same format as 2017 at the Midstream College auditorium. In both cases Jana Lessing has to be commended for her excellent organisation and presentation of the functions.

In order to address constitutional requirements the AGM was split from the awards function this year. At the awards function the committee will report back to the parent community on the activities of the NJSA for the past year but according to the constitution the members of the NJSA are the clubs and schools that play league.

All parents are welcome to attend the AGM where the new committee for 2019 will be elected and other administrative matters dealt with.

4. Raffle

The continued initiative of a raffle to help fund IPT fees was a great success. We raised close to R70 000 of which more than R50 000 went back to parents and players. Thank you to Brett Cousins from Cell C for the great sponsored prizes.

5. SA Schools Convention

The convention took place in the Hartbeespoort dam area early in August and was attended by Blaar Coetzee, Brett Cousins, Musa Malinga and Hennie van Eck. Full feedback from the convention is available on the Squash SA website.

6. Calendar

The NJSA calendar that was distributed at the start of the season worked well. This year the calendar will be integrated with the broader Northerns squash calendar so that players can see all Northerns activities on one calendar, which will further assist everyone in their planning.

7. Participation criteria & challenges

The participation and selection criteria worked well in 2018 and only small changes were made for 2019. The online registration process for challenges was also a success and will be continued. As always the documents and rules are available on the website.

8. Finances

The NJSA finances are in a good state. We again received an unqualified audit and we had a reasonable surplus for the year. We continued to clean up the books by writing off old debts that are irrecoverable and this process is almost complete.

The budgets for the major events were calculated in the finest detail and as a result we were within R1000 of break even for both the Country Schools Festival and the IPT's.

A special mention must be made of parents that were granted 10% discount on their IPT fees (for parents with more than one child representing the province) but who elected to pass that benefit on to other parents who needed it more.

9. Coaching

Eighty percent of registered Northerns junior players are in the programmes of either Maryna Fourie or Liz Mackenzie. There were fewer coaches registered this year than in the past. Most other coaches, excluding school coaches had 5 or less players.

Liz Mackenzie was acknowledged by Squash SA when she won the Castle Coach of the year award from Squash SA this year and the same for Maryna Fourie when she won the Mass participation coach of the year award from Squash SA.

Coaching remains extremely important to ensure the success of our players on all levels and we want to thank them all for the hard work and hours that they put in.

10. Development

Due to the constraints on time and resources the planned development initiative unfortunately did not get off the ground. A modified plan will be implemented in the year to come, with a focus on developing players in schools around clubs, in conjunction with those clubs in order to ensure sustainability.

11. Communication

Communication worked well again this past season. The Northerns website, email newsletters, sms, Whatsapp groups and direct messages, as well as the Northerns Facebook pages were used to communicate with the NJSA community.

12. Hosting 2018

The concept of hosting players from other provinces during is still a novel idea and we anticipate that it will grow in the future and bring more players to our tournaments. Players and parents are encouraged to market the hosting by word of mouth. It will improve the variety of players and give healthy exposure for our players against players who they don't normally play against.

13. Marking & refereeing

From all accounts Northerns players fare reasonably well in the marking and refereeing at the IPT's. However we think it can and should be improved a lot more. A joint initiative in Northerns will tackle this challenge in the new year in a novel way.

Conclusion

It is a pleasure to note that our plan to improve 80 players in all age groups in order to do better at the IPT's worked well this past year. Our players, with the support of their parents and coaches really "came to the party". We have now set the standard and with some more effort Northerns can do even better in 2019.

On a personal note I want to thank everyone for their support during my past 2 years as chairman of the NJSA. I will step down as chairman at the AGM and leave the NJSA in the capable hands of my successor.

Blaar Coetzee

Chairman: NJSA