



**LAYING THE  
FOUNDATIONS FOR  
A STRONGER FUTURE**

**VOLLEYBALL  
ENGLAND**  
ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



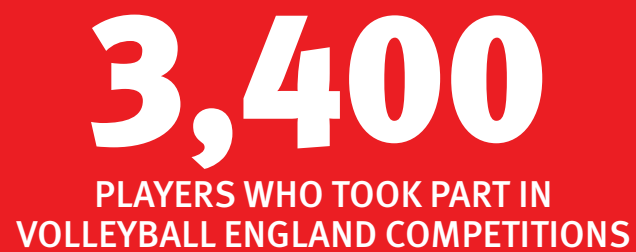
**343**  
CLUB AFFILIATIONS



**3** FIVB BEACH WORLD  
TOUR MEDALS WON  
BY ENGLISH TEAMS



**700**  
THE NUMBER OF  
TEAMS PLAYING  
IN ENGLAND



**3,400**  
PLAYERS WHO TOOK PART IN  
VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND COMPETITIONS

# 2019/2020 IN NUMBERS...

**£72,000**  
WORTH OF GRANTS THAT NATIONAL  
ATHLETES BENEFITTED FROM



**459**  
REGISTERED  
REFEREES



**504**  
REGISTERED  
COACHES

**8.4** / **10**  
HOW DELEGATES RATED OUR  
INAUGURAL CLUB CONFERENCE

**134**  
NVL  
TEAMS



## CONTENTS

**PAGE 4**  
**CHAIR'S REPORT**

Adam Walker provides an overview of Volleyball England's achievements and evolving approach

**PAGE 6**  
**CEO'S REPORT**

Together, the Hub team and community can achieve so much, says Sue Storey

**PAGE 7**  
**DEPUTY CEO'S REPORT**

Sam Jamieson reaffirms the case for why a shift in mindset is needed

**PAGE 8**  
**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Kevin Fletcher gives an update on Volleyball England's finances

**PAGE 10**  
**CORE MARKET REPORT**

Rob Payne provides an overview of member products and services

**PAGE 14**  
**TECHNICAL AND TALENT REPORT**

Gillian Harrison reports on national team achievements and Volleyball England's new coaching initiatives

**PAGE 18**  
**COMPETITIONS REPORT**

Jonathan Moore recaps on a season cut short by the coronavirus

**PAGE 22**  
**COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

Stewart Thorpe explains the fresh focus to our communications

**PAGE 24**  
**REGIONAL REPORTS**

An update on what has taken place in the nine volleyball regions this last year



**OUR VISION:**  
**TO BE A SUSTAINABLE,  
SELF-SUFFICIENT  
ORGANISATION;  
MORE RELEVANT AND  
BETTER CONNECTED  
TO THE VOLLEYBALL  
COMMUNITY**



# CHAIR'S REPORT

Adam Walker provides an overview of Volleyball England's achievements and evolving approach



▲ Adam Walker

▶ Adam handing Kiana Eskandani, of Stockport VC, the 2019 Young Volunteer of the Year Award.

Over the last two years my key messages have transitioned from repair and rebuild to stability and sustainability. Despite the very real challenges associated with ongoing reductions in Sport England funding we have, to a great extent, achieved this agenda.

Overwhelmingly, much of this success must be attributed to the Volleyball England Board and the Hub staff who have been relentless in their endeavours, never losing focus of the work that needs to be done. Particular thanks for this success must go to Janet Inman and Stewart Dunne, Volleyball England's former CEO and COO who have now left to enjoy new challenges, as well as Sam Jamieson, now the Deputy CEO. Without their fantastic leadership the sport would not be in such a favourable position.



viewed as a positive one by the majority.

To aid this process we will continue to build the sport's insight. The ongoing development and enhancement of VolleyZone, the online community portal that we launched last summer, has become one of Volleyball England's cornerstones and as the platform develops further, the service we provide to our customers can be enhanced.

Controlling our own financial destiny will also be given even greater emphasis. Despite an incredibly cluttered and competitive market, we will continually work hard to diversify our funding and secure new income streams. Any success in this area allows us to develop more quickly and effectively. From an internal perspective we will continue to appraise the things we do, ensuring all our programmes, initiatives and competitions have long-term sustainability at the core of their design and delivery. Again, this may frustrate some, however, we hope it will be appreciated by most of the volleyball family.



CREDIT: PHIL GIBBIN

**“OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS MY KEY MESSAGES HAVE TRANSITIONED FROM REPAIR AND REBUILD TO STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.”**

▲ East London Lynx take on Sheffield in the 2019 Sitting Grand Prix Final.

## CHANGE

Looking to the future, our approach will change again. Working with our new CEO Sue Storey, our new focus will concentrate on the iterative development of the sport, ensuring that we have the relevant building blocks in place to bring in new participants, keep the ones we have and grow the opportunities for all those that want to play the sport, so that they enjoy their involvement and fulfil their aspirations.

To deliver the meaningful change we all desire will require a balance of patience, pragmatism and ambition. With very limited discretionary funds, we will continually have to innovate, finding new and creative ways to deliver. In addition, our future focus will have prioritisation at the heart of everything we do. Whilst some of our decisions will inevitably not be popular with everyone, we sincerely hope that our overall approach will be



CREDIT: CEV

▲ IBB Polonia made history at the Copper Box Arena by becoming the first British side to take part in the CEV Champions League - Europe's premier club competition.

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Our Annual Report is the perfect vehicle for bringing together a year's worth of work to help us to take stock, see the bigger picture and reflect on some of volleyball's successes. For example, after much hard work, in August, beach volleyball was confirmed for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. In October, England Girls made history by winning a silver medal at the NEVZA U17 Championships – a record finish for an England team in a NEVZA competition – while later that month, IBB Polonia London brought Champions League volleyball to England for the first time. And then, more recently, the Volleyball England

Foundation marked its relaunch with a fresh new website in February.

For many of these achievements and much more, we owe our thanks to the army of volunteers – our grassroots heroes – that have made it possible.

As this report is being compiled, the country is dealing with unprecedented societal change triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. Time will tell what the overall impact will be on Volleyball England and the volleyball community, but rest assured we are rising to meet these challenges. When we emerge from this period of uncertainty, we will make sure we are ready to work with you all to achieve our collective ambition. 🙌



▲ Beach volleyball was one of three sports to be added to the programme for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Andres Hernandez  
Independent Director



Brendan Fogarty  
Non-Executive Director



Clare Francis  
Vice-Chair



Freda Bussey MBE  
Non-Executive Director



Ian Wall  
Independent Director



Jefferson Williams  
Non-Executive Director



Richard Harrison  
Non-Executive Director



Seyram Atubra  
Non-Executive Director



Simon Griffiths  
Non-Executive Director



# CEO REPORT

Together, the Hub team and community can achieve so much, says Sue Storey



▲ Sue Storey

I am honoured to contribute to my first Annual Report as Chief Executive of Volleyball England. When I joined in November, it was clear that Janet Inman and the team had put in a lot of hard work to get the sport to the position it is in now. During my first few months, some key themes have really stood out.

## SUPPORT

I have been overwhelmed by the incredible support that has been given to me. The Hub team prove daily what a hardworking and committed group they are – it is great to be a part of a team that is driven to achieve the best for volleyball. The Board, and in particular our chairman Adam Walker, are a strong, professional and dedicated group who support but are not afraid to challenge what is being done. They too have big ambitions for the future. Finally, I have been able to meet many amazing volunteers, who are truly the backbone of this sport. Thank you for the great work you do, I will do everything I can to help you carry on doing what you do.

## ENTHUSIASM

One of my favourite parts of this role has been seeing the passion that people have for volleyball. We know it is a sleeping giant in this country and it is great to see everyone's hunger and desire to take on challenges, to make a difference and to share volleyball with as many people as possible.

## RELATIONSHIPS

I strongly believe that growth will come about because of strong, sustainable relationships with people across the sports sector, and we are committed to creating these strong bonds through our values of being open, innovative, respectful, connected, and inclusive.

**“IT IS GREAT TO BE A PART OF A TEAM THAT IS DRIVEN TO ACHIEVE THE BEST FOR VOLLEYBALL.”**



▲ Sue Storey pictured with Sue Sowden, Secretary of Newcastle Panthers VC.



▲ Loughborough University's SportPark facility is home to Volleyball England's Hub team.

## VISION

Our vision is to be a sustainable, self-sufficient organisation, more relevant and better connected to the volleyball community, and this has never been more tested than during the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, working towards this vision, we are putting clubs at the centre of the sport's eco-system, improving our products and services, and working to promote the idea of 'volleyball for life'.

## EXCITEMENT

Volleyball is such an exciting sport to watch and play and – by the levels of passion across the sport – it is also such an exciting community to be part of. We are embarking on an exciting new change of focus that will grow and develop the sport for many years, and we need to do this as a collaborative community with strong relationships. Together, the future feels both positive and exciting.

As you read through this Annual Report, I am sure you will, like me, be amazed at the things that are being achieved across the country. Building on the challenges of the past, I look forward with such a positive view of what more we can achieve together in the future. Our collective plans are ambitious, but I know that if we work together, we can make them happen. 🙌

# DEPUTY CEO'S REPORT

Sam Jamieson reaffirms the case for why a shift in mindset is needed

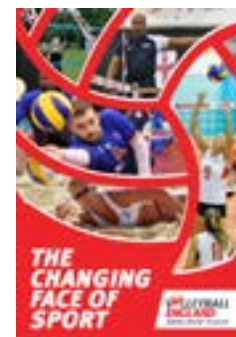


▲ Sam Jamieson

The 2019/20 financial year began with an eye-opening full-cost analysis of Volleyball England's products and services which confirmed that much of what we do is delivered at a significant loss. These are not strategic investments based on short or long-term objectives. These losses have come about due to a delay in making necessary adjustments following decreases in funding.

Much of 2019/20 has been spent recognising the need for a shift in mindset and implementing a much more sustainable approach in both our delivery of products and services to the sport as well as our internal operations. At the start of the year the Board took decisive forward-thinking action to increase and/or add fees across competitions and affiliations. This was in addition to cost saving measures. This action was taken to protect the future of volleyball activities by making them more self-sustaining. We were really pleased to see the amount of positive feedback on these change and have been heartened by the response from the community to what has naturally been unwelcome news.

Understanding more about the people consuming our sport and streamlining the processes by which we attain, store, and use data has also been a key focus. On this front, the development of VolleyZone has continued and after significant teething problems, it is now functional across all the intended aspects. We're thankful for the patience and understanding of those who have engaged and persevered with VolleyZone while it has evolved. We are looking forward to a smoother roll out of new functionalities in 2020/21 and anticipate a reduction in the time needed to complete some everyday processes. Internally, the senior management team was subject to a restructure that saw a reduction



▲ In last year's Annual Report we indicated that Volleyball England would have to take action to protect the future of the sport.

**“UNDERSTANDING MORE ABOUT THE PEOPLE CONSUMING OUR SPORT... HAS ALSO BEEN A KEY FOCUS.”**



▲ We have introduced individual player registration fees for more competitions, such as the Grand Prix, to make them more sustainable.



▲ Richmond beat debutants Urmston Grammar in the 2019 Girls' U15 Final.

in the overall head count from one part-time and three full-time members of staff to one part-time and two full-time posts, which are made up of the CEO, Deputy CEO and Financial Consultant.

Throughout the year we have operated carefully with little financial resilience and have uncovered historic matters that have further dented our progress to building a robust business prepared for life's inevitable challenges. The future direction of the sport will reflect the learnings from these significant challenges and see a greater emphasis on embedding sound business processes into everything we do. This will be led by guiding principles that we hope will be adopted throughout the sport. The intention here is to make our sport more business minded with a view to becoming a thriving and sustainable sport. 🙌



# FINANCIAL REPORT

Kevin Fletcher gives an update on Volleyball England's finances



▲ Kevin Fletcher

Volleyball England's financial situation is changing for the better as we strive to become more sustainable.

During the previous two years, our austerity measures and good financial management have made Volleyball England financially secure and have allowed us to build up some reserves. These can then be used to cover any unexpected financial situations. At the end of 2018/19, we reported an error in the way we had accounted for VAT to HMRC. During 2019/20, we have worked with HMRC to identify the problem and have since agreed the levels of under declaration for the previous three years. This has now been fully paid and no penalties have been imposed.

Our auditors instructed us to post these costs in the years they relate to and to change our opening reserves for 2019. For the financial year 2019/20 we generated a £114,062 surplus. Although a reduction in central funding had a significant impact, we have managed to cover this by re-profiling some Sport England underspend, together with new income streams and stringent cost controls.

Sport England agreed to our request to reprofile underspends from our grant income in years one and two (2017/18 and 2018/19) to support years three and four (2019/20 and 2020/21). These underspends have minimised the negative impact of the VAT under declaration on reserves carried forward into the 2020-21 financial year. A policy on Volleyball England's reserves is currently being

▼ The amount that programmes such as the National Talent Pathway are subsidised has been reduced.



▲ The HEVO Conference, which was previously free to attend, is now a paid-for event.

developed to ensure we can cover our liabilities should the worst happen.

## NEW PEOPLE AND WAYS OF WORKING

The 2019/20 financial year has also seen a change of personnel in Volleyball England's finance department. In November I joined Volleyball England on a part-time basis as the new Financial Consultant while Adam Freundlich started in March as our full-time Financial Assistant.

At the end of December, we moved onto a new finance system: Xero, which is much better suited to the requirements of Volleyball England. As well as being substantially cheaper to operate, Xero is a cloud-based system which is much simpler to use with improved security and disaster recovery. Another change to our processes has seen the creation of a Finance Sub Committee to speed up financial decisions. This committee has the authority to make specific finance decisions without waiting for Board approval.

Finally, the coronavirus has significantly disrupted the activity of Volleyball England and, while we continue to adapt our approach, it will be some time before we can measure its full impact. One measure we took to save costs was to furlough some members of staff during the period of downtime.

Whilst we will continue to face fiscal challenges in 2020/21 with our central funding dropping, we have changed the ways in which we work to ensure we can improve our financial stability and I'm confident we will meet whatever challenges lie ahead. 🙌

**“OUR AUSTERITY MEASURES AND GOOD FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT HAVE MADE VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND FINANCIALLY SECURE”**



# MANAGING THE MONEY

A breakdown of how Volleyball England has managed its finances in the last 12 months

## Where did the money come from?

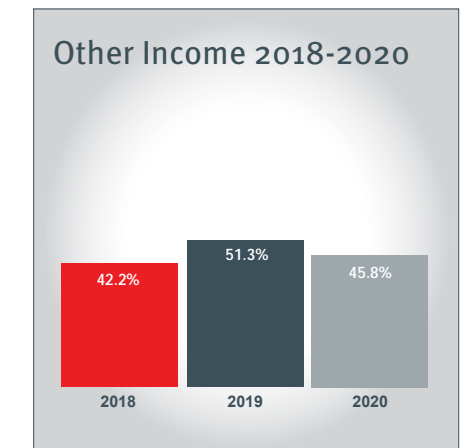
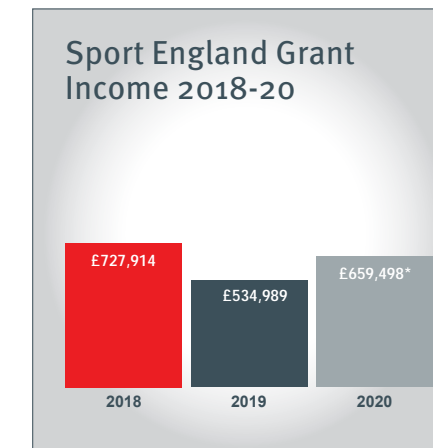
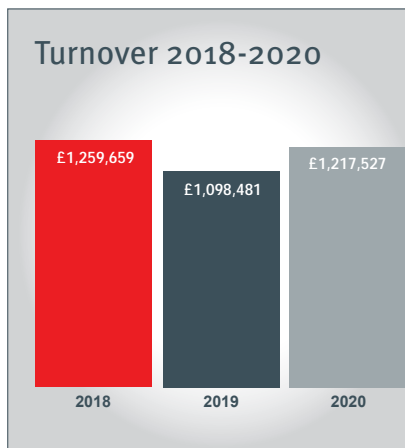
Sport England Grants 19/20	£581,218
Sport England Grants underspend 17/18 & 18/19	£78,280
Commercial Income	£22,005
Talent	£171,588
Technical Courses	£51,726
Children & Young People	£8,598
Membership	£56,185
Diploma in Sporting Excellence	£94,979
Competition & Events	£152,948
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,217,527</b>

## Where did the money go?

Operating Costs	£224,226
Salaries	£462,757
Commercial Costs	£1,743
Talent	£258,056
Technical Courses	£25,873
Children & Young People	£46,616
Competition & Events	£54,180
Diploma in Sporting Excellence	£30,014
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,103,465</b>

Note: The categorisation of income and expenses cannot directly be compared to previous years because of a change in the way figures are reported.

\* This figure includes reprofiled underspends from 2017/18 and 2018/19





# CORE MARKET REPORT

Rob Payne provides an overview of member products and services



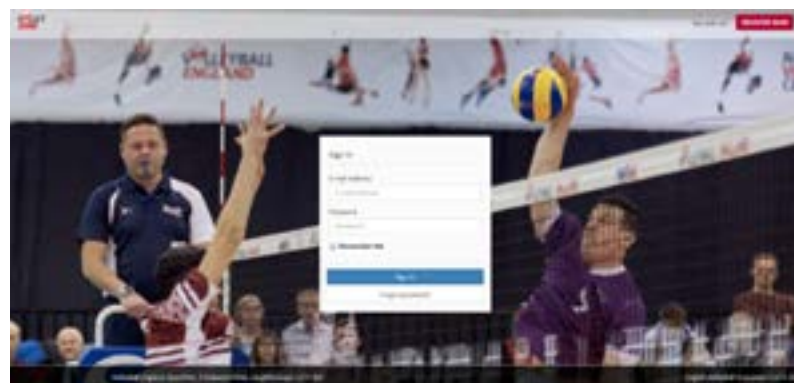
▲ Rob Payne

Volleyball England's core market encompasses the people who play, coach, officiate and volunteer in the sport. As an organisation, we aim to serve this dedicated cohort of people by continually evolving our products, methods, and services to meet their needs and the ever-changing landscape. Understanding our core market is more vital than ever, not only to ensure that the sport is built sustainably but also to develop our position as a valuable organisation to all.

## TECHNOLOGY

One of the key changes for the core market this year has been the introduction of VolleyZone. The new membership portal operates on a more individualised basis and allows each person to take ownership of: their account, the clubs they are part of, the teams they play in; and the events they enter. VolleyZone also aims to reduce the administrative burden on the volunteers that run the sport, from regional chairs to team secretaries. The system is designed to host all the data in a way that is easy to manage and quick to view.

**“ONE OF THE KEY CHANGES FOR THE CORE MARKET THIS YEAR HAS BEEN THE INTRODUCTION OF VOLLEYZONE.”**



Leeds RGA VC captured the Women's Shield after defeating London Inter Women

CREDIT: STEVE SMITH

Clearly over the last 12 months the launch of VolleyZone has not been smooth. There have been many issues facing members using the portal and we thank you for your patience and constructive feedback. All the feedback has been reviewed and we are in daily dialogue with the developers to improve the user experience. For the next season, two significant new elements will be added to VolleyZone: national squad events and education courses. Furthermore, there will be new ways to process bulk transactions such as multiple player, coach and referee registrations as well as event entries.

Moving forward we envisage integrating VolleyZone with regional and local leagues to

reduce the administrative burden for the league providers, clubs, teams, and players too. This will provide us with a more in-depth understanding of the people that play our sport, thus providing a more tailored and fit for purpose service to those individuals.

Technology has also allowed us to enhance the service we provide to members through the introduction of live webinars. During the coronavirus pandemic, we utilised the Microsoft Teams platform to deliver a live webinar to share guidance on how to navigate through uncertain times. This proved a success with over 120 attendees. Hundreds of people also took the opportunity to re-watch the session by playing

back a recording on YouTube. This method of communication will certainly become more prominent going forward.

## 2019 CLUB CONFERENCE

This year we focussed on applying feedback from the Annual Club Survey to launch a new event: the Club Conference. One of the key questions from the survey was: "how could Volleyball England support you as a club?" and five core themes were extracted from the responses: marketing, funding, facilities, juniors and websites. These themes then became workshops. Led by industry experts, the workshops proved to be a huge success with 50 attendees from across the country. Overall, workshops were ▶



► The 2019/20 cohort of HEVOs.

rated 8.4/10 while attendees scored the event's value for money at 7.9/10.

### MEMBERSHIP

In 2019/20, there were 343 clubs that chose to affiliate to Volleyball England, a reduction of 39 from the previous year. Research will be conducted into why those clubs chose not to affiliate this year to understand trends and identify ways of adding more value to the membership offer. On a positive note, there were 27 new clubs that affiliated to Volleyball England – highlighting a new cohort of clubs that want to benefit from club development support and entry into national level competitions.

Our focus for 2020/21 is to continue to support clubs to become more sustainable and reduce the number that fold. Hub research has also identified that there are almost 700 teams playing volleyball in 39 leagues in England.

Looking at individual memberships, there was also a drop in coach registrations from 697 in 2017/18 to 504 this year. We know some of this is down to the reduction in free coach registrations from last year, when the 'Level 1 Introduction to Coaching' course was re-launched. Referee registrations also dropped from 630 in 2017/18 to 459. We appreciate that reductions in the number of registered clubs, coaches and referees paint quite a negative picture. We share your desire to see these numbers rise and know that we need to continually adapt to meet the needs of members so that we demonstrate value for money.

### ANNUAL CLUB SURVEY

In 2019, we once again conducted a Club Survey, which was sent to all the secretaries of affiliated clubs. The survey aimed to research their

**“VOLLEYZONE WILL PROVIDE US WITH A MORE IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF THE PEOPLE THAT PLAY OUR SPORT”**



▲ Richmond VC were named 'Club of the Year' at our Annual Awards.



▲ Officials at the 2019 Cup Finals weekend.



perceptions of Volleyball England, identify member benefits they valued the most and areas in which more support was required.

We were pleased to see the response rate was higher than the previous year (up to 39% from 25%) and that members felt the service they received from Volleyball England was improving (from 5.59 to 6.47 out of 10).

The data told us that respondents were most satisfied with our advice on: safeguarding; communications with clubs and leagues; and competitions, which received the highest levels of satisfaction. On the other hand, linking your club to partners, grassroots development and developing volunteers gained the lowest. This insight will help to shape the development of a new strategy, which will very much centre around developing clubs and reaching out to the grassroots level of the sport.

### SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding continues to be an area in which the membership feels it receives good support from Volleyball England.

This year has again seen Volleyball England awarded a green rating for safeguarding by the Child Protection in Sport Unit of the NSPCC, highlighting us as a model of best practice. Clubs also completed 130 new DBS checks, which are provided free of charge by Volleyball England and save clubs over £10 per check. Five clubs also



▲ The Level 2 volleyball coaching qualification has also been relaunched with a fresh new look.

benefitted from specialised safeguarding support from trained Hub staff when a formal investigation was required.

### HEVO PROGRAMME

This year the Higher Education Volleyball Officer (HEVO) programme maintained its status as one of the most successful university participation programmes whilst becoming a lot more sustainable.

Due to the uncertain future of funding to support the programme, the introduction of a fee between £100 - £250 for universities was introduced.

Despite this, the number of applications did not drop, demonstrating the value for money that the programme offers. Nine new universities also joined which means new institutions and cohorts of students were engaged in volleyball.

Furthermore, new equipment was installed in six universities to offer 4v4 volleyball and accommodate larger student audiences.

The training for the 70 new volunteers in the sport once again proved to be a massive success. Participants scored an overall rating of 8.53 out of 10 with 100% of the HEVOs saying they would recommend the conference to others.

Once sustainability is achieved within the programme, the next steps are to build the relationship between the HEVO programme and the club network. Whilst there are already strong links in pockets across the country, the more than 4,000 students and 70 HEVOs each year could provide a significant boost to the volleyball community in the future.

### COURSES

Volleyball England has facilitated 32 courses this year. These have seen: 202 learners engage in refereeing courses, 49 teachers trained in delivering volleyball, and 221 learners take on coaching qualifications. These figures would have been higher had we not been forced to cancel some courses as a result of the coronavirus. 🙏



# TECHNICAL AND TALENT REPORT

Gillian Harrison reports on national team achievements and Volleyball England's new coaching initiatives



▲ Gillian Harrison

We continue to adapt the national team programmes to ensure we provide the opportunity for talented athletes to progress and develop through the England Talent Pathway. We know that successful pathways require expert coaching, leadership, and support staff all working towards a shared vision.

While the training base at the National Volleyball Centre means we can provide regular camps for the best athletes to train together, the Head Coaches were keen to expand the volleyball and beach volleyball competition programmes and to increase the number of training hours. Consequently, the volleyball "High Peaks" camp made a much-requested return.

The U17 Girls accepted an invitation to Sardinia, Italy, in June to compete in the Sardegna Volleyball Challenge and came face-to-face with the Russian team that went on to win bronze at the U16 European Championship weeks later. To gain valuable match practice, the U17 Boys entered the National Volleyball League, made possible by their opponents' generosity in permitting the England side to play home and away matches at the National Volleyball Centre. Both England U17 teams headed off to Italy between Christmas and New Year to take part in the Acqua Pradis Winter Cup. The boys finished in 5th and the girls in 8th.

More beach camps were added to the summer programme and, to gain competition experience, the beach athletes targeted UK Beach Tour events. The junior women also accepted an invitation to compete in the Middle European Zonal Championships.

**"ENGLAND SENIOR TEAMS MADE A WELCOME RETURN ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE BY ENTERING THE NOVOTEL CUP"**



▲ Simon Loftus, Head Coach of the England Men's Team, was very happy with the squad's performance at the Novotel Cup.

With an increasing programme we are conscious of the increased costs. Finding external grants to support athletes in the programme has therefore become a key area of work. Backing the Best and Sports Aid are the main contributors to the England Talent Pathway athletes. This year 34 athletes benefitted directly from £72,000 worth of grants.

We were pleased to receive 10 Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme awards. These have been split between indoor and beach athletes, who receive a package of services such as strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, psychology and nutrition that is delivered by qualified practitioners to help them balance their sporting and academic careers while at university. We also have 56 athletes in nine schools and colleges studying the Diploma in Sporting Excellence, an educational qualification taken alongside further education that prepares them for life as an athlete.

## INDOOR COMPETITIONS

The North European Volleyball Zonal Association (NEVZA) was the main competitive focus for the England youth squads. The Girls made history as they won a silver medal at the U17 Championships - a record finish for an England team in a NEVZA competition. In a closely contested pool with Sweden and Denmark, England progressed to the semi-final where a fantastic performance saw the England Girls overcome the Faroe Islands two sets to one.

The final did not go the way England wanted against hosts Denmark. The Danes took the 1st set, but England fought back to win a tight 2nd set. The Danes were not to be denied and took the next two sets and the title.

There may not have been the perfect ending for England but history had already been made under the leadership of Head Coach Darren Lewis. Katie Keefe and Niamh Davies were also chosen in the competition's Super 7 team.



For the England Boys, the NEVZA U17 competition was a learning curve. They were defeated in all the pool matches and, despite getting into some good positions in matches, they eventually finished the tournament in 5th position.

The U19s travelled to Finland to compete against Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands.

After being edged out in the pool stages by excellent sides from Finland and Denmark, who went on to take gold and silver respectively. There was certainly no need to be disheartened by losing out to the two best teams and England went on to win their next three games to finish 5th. When it came to tournament dream team, England's Georgia McGovern was selected in the Super 7.

In the Men's competition, England finished bottom, but it is fair to say it didn't do them justice. In the pool stages, they they were faced with a tough test against Denmark and came out on the wrong end of a five setter. They also met eventual champions Finland and were competitive. Their final game against the Faroe Islands was a close game too but England were on the wrong end of the 3-1 score line. It was only against champions Finland that England failed to notch a set and now know they can win more matches at this level. This is the challenge for Head Coach Keith Trenam and his new coaching team.

England Senior Teams made a welcome



▲ An England Cadet training camp.

◀ Great Britain Women's Sitting Volleyball Team

return on the international stage by entering the Novotel Cup to face Iceland, Scotland, and hosts Luxembourg. Apart from captain Meg Viggars, every one of Head Coach Maria Bertelli's team gained their first international cap and such a young side did well to win silver. It was a silver medal too for Simon Loftus' team - a blend of home-based youth players and experienced overseas professionals.

## BEACH VOLLEYBALL

It was a special summer for English beach volleyball as England teams won three FIVB World Tour medals. After Ellie Austin and Anaya Evans ended England's 20-year wait for a World Tour medal in June, England's beach stars added two more World Tour medals in Rwanda in July. These medals





◀ Volleyball Futures is the ideal stepping stone for those looking to join the England Talent Pathway.

▶ England U16's heading to Italy for the Acqua Pradis Winter Cup.

came by way of Jess Grimson and Vicky Palmer and Javier and Joaquin Bello. The U22 World Championships in Thailand was just too early in the season for the Bello brothers to make their expected impact. With Joaquin starting his return to full fitness after struggling with a nigging injury, they were eliminated in the qualification rounds.

England Men qualified for the 2nd round of the Continental Cup, which is a qualification route for the 2020 Olympic Games. Due to take place in May, the Continental Cup has been postponed in response to the coronavirus crisis and the players are waiting to hear from the FIVB and the International Olympic Committee about any revisions to qualifying process before they resume their preparation.

England put in a superb performance to come home with a gold and a bronze from the NEVZA Beach Volleyball Championships in Tylösand, Sweden. As English beach volleyball continues its rise, Ellie Austin and Katie Keefe were crowned champions in the Women's U19 competition, while Isabelle Tucker and Lisa Canevari landed a brilliant bronze in the U17 tournament. In August, England Women's teams dominated the Home Nations U18 Beach Volleyball Championships in Cardiff, taking all three podium places. A young

▼ Javier and Joaquin Bello.

## “IT WAS A SPECIAL SUMMER FOR ENGLISH BEACH VOLLEYBALL AS ENGLAND TEAMS WON THREE FIVB WORLD TOUR MEDALS.”



England Men's team was pipped by Scotland in the golden set to finish with a silver. Coaches Luis Bello and Matt Rhymer have worked tirelessly to build the junior programme with 75 young athletes committed to beach volleyball.

### SITTING VOLLEYBALL

After a five-year absence, Great Britain Women's Team played at the 2019 European Championships in Budapest. Although, on the surface, the results were disappointing, it was a necessary step for the long-term development in re-establishing Great Britain's sitting volleyball programmes at European and world level.

The team's preparation from January 2019 included 36 training sessions and playing at: the Stavanger Sit Cup (March 2019), the Sitting Volleyball Cup (April 2019) and the Dutch Cup (June 2019).

The competitions allowed Head Coach Ian Legrand to identify the gaps between GB's performance level and what is required to compete with the top teams at the European and World Championships.

The Great Britain Men restarted training in September after a two-year break with the aim of competing at the European "B" Championship. Between September and February, the programme established momentum and saw training take place 11 times before the lockdown.

The team are currently working on their individual conditioning in preparation for the restarting of training and the European "B" Championship, which is due to be rescheduled in late 2020.

### VOLLEYBALL FUTURES

Volleyball Futures aims to develop sound volleyball fundamentals in young players while also ensuring coaches and teachers understand the importance of those fundamentals and feel confident teaching the sport's fundamentals. Volleyball Futures sets the groundwork for the England Talent Pathway.

At the Volleyball Futures camp in October, 55 athletes and 15 coaches from eight regions responded to challenges set by guest expert Steve McKeown from Leeds Beckett University to improve their balance, coordination, ball tracking and movement skills. The coaches gained insight as to why these skills are fundamental for successful volleyball performance and took away lots of ideas and practices to try out in their clubs' sessions.



### VOLLEY2S

Volley2s was created in response to requests from the Children and Young People Network to have appropriate volleyball competition for primary aged children. Volley2s takes players from an easy to play catch and throw game through four developmental stages (red, amber, green, and gold) to play 2v2 volleyball. At each stage new movement and volleyball skills, tactical and problem-solving skills, and social skills are introduced. Volley2s can be played on small courts, regardless of surface, it can be played inside or outside between same sex or mixed teams. It is versatile, accessible, emphasises fun, and has low equipment and space requirements making Volley2s an ideal stepping stone for introducing youngsters to volleyball.

Our Volley2s programme consists of a 105-page guide to teaching and coaching; a 'Festival Pack' that includes guidance on how to organise a competition; and the Primary Volleyball Award which is a face to face training course for teachers and coaches.

The brand new Volley2s Guide to Teaching and Coaching is one of the most comprehensive coaching resources ever produced by Volleyball England. An innovative approach to session planning means coaches and teachers have an endless supply of session plans to carry them through each season. Selecting from over 30 warmups, cool downs, and 60 volleyball

development activities each with suggestions on how to adapt them, teachers and coaches are shown how to create unique sessions that meet the needs of their players. Included in the resource is a series of technical cards which illustrate the core volleyball skills and concepts alongside the main coaching points.

The handy Volley2s Festival Pack contains everything needed to organise a successful Volley2s competition.

Volley2s has been put together by Nick Shaffery, Bertrand Olie and Gillian Harrison with the help of dozens of contributors from the Children and Young People Network, the PremierLeague4Sport activators who coach volleyball in schools across England, and volleyball coaches and teachers who took part in the Primary Volleyball Launch at the National Volleyball Centre in October.

### SCHOOL GAMES

Over 17,500 schools take part in The School Games organised by the Youth Sport Trust (YST). Volleyball is a popular sport featuring in 30 out of 47 school games partnerships. Last summer, Volleyball England jumped at the chance to work with the YST to update the volleyball resources which are available to every school to help them prepare the children and young people to take part in the Games. 🐦

▲ Ellie Austin and Anaya Evans (far right) on the women's podium at the 2019 FIVB World Tour 1-star in Ios.



▲ Volley2s is one of the most comprehensive coaching resources ever produced by Volleyball England.



# COMPETITIONS REPORT

Jonathan Moore recaps on an events calendar cut short by the coronavirus



▲ Jonathan Moore

Volleyball England continued to take steps to build the foundations for a stronger future by ensuring our competitions were more sustainable during the 2019-20 season.

The introduction of player registrations for sitting, junior and student competitions was a big part of this. While an unpopular development for some, it was required to ensure our competitions become more sustainable. The jump from no fee to a fee was no doubt difficult to swallow and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who invested to take part in our events.

Nearly 700 juniors, 100 sitting players and 600 students paid to play in Volleyball England competitions this season. New fees did result in a reduction in the number of entries to Volleyball England competitions, but this new income means these events have a future, and a bright one at that. We need to continue to build on this and will need the support of the community to do this. Overall, just under 3,400 players took part in our events this year. This number would have been higher had it not been for event cancellations at the end of the season.

Another development to ensure Volleyball England's competitions become more sustainable was the introduction of VolleyZone. Whilst we experienced some initial problems with the platform, it will help to streamline processes for administrating competitions.

Across the year we have maintained the quality of our events, which is a real positive for members. Volleyball England has always set the bar high in terms of the delivery of competitions and the steps we have taken to ensure these events are sustainable will help maintain the quality for years to come.

**“WE DO NOT YET KNOW THE FULL EXTENT TO WHICH THE CORONAVIRUS WILL IMPACT VOLLEYBALL”**



▲ James Murphy (left) leads the Competitions Working Group.

▼ The Inter Regional Championships take place around May Bank Holiday on what is always a big weekend in the volleyball calendar.



## CORONAVIRUS

The coronavirus pandemic quickly began to impact Volleyball England competitions from the second week of March. Within days of receiving emails from teams concerned about the virus, Volleyball England had issued a statement that allowed NVL teams to postpone matches where they felt it necessary, which was an unprecedented step. Just four days after that, we cancelled all Volleyball England activity until 20th May. Extensions to the cancellation followed.

These decisions were made in consultation with the Board, Senior Management Team, James Murphy, who is the lead for the Competitions Working Group, and Volleyball England's Coordinators.

Each decision was taken considering all the information we had at our disposal and, without doubt, it is a decision we would all make again – an extraordinary decision for extraordinary times. Personally, the decision to cancel all activity made me feel sick as we had put so much in to get to that point in the season. I have no doubt the decision did not sit easy with many members, but I am sure we all acknowledge it was the right one to make.

## NVL

Some 134 teams took part in the NVL during the 2019-20 season, an increase of three on the previous season. In total we welcomed 15 new teams and saw 12 sides depart the league.



Before the coronavirus brought the Women's Super League to a halt, Polonia SideOut London had already secured the league title – their first since 2010-11. In the Men's Super League, IBB Polonia London were undefeated and within one win of clinching the title with four matches to play when all remaining matches in the season were cancelled.

Several teams had clinched their division title by the time that the coronavirus hit too, including: Leeds RGA Men (M1), Weymouth Beach Volleyball Club (M2S), Liverpool (M3N) and Coventry & Warwick Riga (M3C). However, it was the women's teams that clinched titles in the most style – Coventry & Warwick Riga (W2N) and Urmston Grammar Volleyball (W3N) were unbeaten en route to claiming their titles. In addition, London Lionhearts (W2S), London Giants (W3SE) and Southampton Volleyball Club Women 1 (W3SW) all remained undefeated by the time the league was suspended. Although mathematically they had not yet clinched the title, they were on course to do so. The final standings were confirmed across the NVL by the Competitions Working Group, with unplayed matches being declared a draw. This resulted in the aforementioned teams clinching the respective titles in their leagues as well as Darkstar Derbyshire (W1); University of Nottingham (M2N); UK Armed Forces Men (M3S); and MK City (W3C).

## CEV CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

IBB Polonia broke new ground as they became the

first English team to play in the CEV Champions League. The Super League and NEVZA club champions took on Mladost Zagreb of Croatia in the first round in October 2019.

Having lost the 1st leg, IBB Polonia took on the Croatian champions at home at the Copper Box Arena. The home side were supported by over 1,000 fans and aided on court by the former world and Olympic champion, Brazilian legend Giba. Despite a heroic effort on court and an incredible spectacle, it wasn't to be for IBB Polonia as they lost out to Mladost Zagreb. Despite being knocked out of the Champions League, IBB Polonia did progress to the last 16 of the CEV Cup against an old adversary in the form of Draisma Dynamo Apeldoorn. The team from the Netherlands had previously ended IBB Polonia's run in the 2016-17 CEV Challenge Cup. Unfortunately, it was the same story as 2016-17 with Draisma taking both legs of the match to inflict another defeat on IBB Polonia. We have no doubt IBB Polonia will be back in European action in the future, and should they meet Draisma again, I am sure it will be a case of 3rd time lucky. IBB Polonia continue to lead the way for volleyball in England and they will no doubt be making the headlines again sometime soon.

## BEACH VOLLEYBALL

UK Beach Tour (UKBT), the Volleyball England-approved beach tour event provider, delivered over 80 events to 1,200 players in what was another outstanding year. There were three Grand Slam ▶

▲ It has been another outstanding year for UKBT.

▼ From the Competitions Working Group to the courtside assistants at our major events, volunteers bring a passion and enthusiasm to the sport that knows no bounds.





## “THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND AND UKBT IS AN IMPORTANT ONE”

events and 10 event organisers covered locations as far and wide as Crystal Palace, Leyton, Richmond, Oxford, Bournemouth, Weymouth, Croyde, Cardiff, Brighton and Bridlington.

Issa Batrane created history by not only taking home the title of UKBT champion but also completing the triple and winning all three UKBT Grand Slams in 2019, a truly remarkable achievement from Batrane.

The partnership between Volleyball England and UKBT is an important one for Volleyball England. The structure the UKBT and all the beach event organisers bring to a beach tour is what Volleyball England was looking to achieve but didn't have the resources on its own to deliver. The UKBT offers more events to a wider range of locations than the previous Volleyball England Beach Tour format used to. It has made a beach tour more accessible, more sustainable and UKBT should be praised for their efforts in making it happen. The beach tour provides a fantastic platform for players of all abilities to compete, and has an integral role to play in the development of English beach players. Volleyball England and the beach volleyball community need to support UKBT to ensure a beach tour in England continues, especially in light of the impact of coronavirus.

115 pairs took to the sand on Sandbanks beach for the BUCS Beach Volleyball Championships, demonstrating the strength of beach volleyball across the university sector. Northumbria University claimed the top prizes taking both the Men's and Women's Championship golds. The Northumbria pair were Kjos and Spragg, who denied Bournemouth University's Batrane and Jones a hatrick of BUCS Beach Volleyball Championship crowns. In the Women's Championship, Racich and Sato ensured that Northumbria University have now claimed gold in every year that the BUCS Beach Volleyball Championships have been staged. The event

▼ UKBT delivered over 80 events to 1,200 players.



PHOTO: STEVE SMITH

includes a trophy and shield level, giving all who want to play an opportunity to compete at a standard suitable for them. Volleyball England delivered the event on behalf of BUCS and in partnership with Bournemouth University, SportBU and Deepdish.

The Inter Regional U18 Beach Volleyball Championships took to the sands in its inaugural year. Played in an exciting format, each squad consisted of two pairs. Pair #1 and pair #2 played a duel against pair #1 and pair #2 from another region. If both pairs from one team win, the job was done! However, if it is 1-1 in the duel then there is a golden set to 15 points, with any two of the four squad players eligible to play. After 106 matches and 27 golden sets, London were crowned the winners of the first-ever Inter Regional U18 Beach Volleyball Championships in both the Men's and Women's event.

### SITTING VOLLEYBALL

The introduction of a new sitting volleyball player registration fee has impacted on the number of teams participating in the Grand Prix. While only one fewer team competed in the Grand Prix in 2019-20 compared to the 2018-19 season, we did see a dramatic reduction in the wildcard teams who had previously entered, with 2019-20 seeing no wildcard teams enter the Grand Prix. Just under 100 players took part this season and we thank them for their contributions towards the competition's sustainability.

The Grand Prix was curtailed by the coronavirus with the 5th Grand Prix, semi finals and finals still due to take place. The decision was taken to end the season using the Grand Prix standings after the 4th Grand Prix to determine the places, meaning that Help4Heroes A bring home a first title since 2014 when the team used to be called Battleback. South Hants take 2nd place and collect their first medals in the Grand Prix.

### NATIONAL CUP AND SHIELD

53 men's teams and 49 women's teams embarked on the journey to be crowned National Cup or Shield champions. 90 matches had been played in the men's competition and 82 in the women's by the time that the coronavirus brought a halt to proceedings, with only the finals left to play. The Men's Cup final was set to be Durham Palatinates vs IBB Polonia London, and University of Nottingham vs Onyx London in the Men's Shield.



PHOTO: STEVE SMITH

In the Women's Cup, Durham Palatinates were due to take on Northumbria University and in the Women's Shield Darkstar Derbyshire vs London Lionhearts. These matches could yet be staged in the future.

### THE STUDENT CUP

The steps to make the Student Cup more sustainable have resulted in fewer teams taking part, but the decline in numbers is not solely as a result of the introduction of player registration fees, as numbers had declined previous to this from the peak numbers in 2016-17. Increases in entry fees, changes to the HEVO programme and changes to BUCS's provision of recreational student volleyball could all have impacted on the declining numbers. Thanks to the contributions from players, the durability of one of Volleyball England's longest running competitions remains, and the Student Cup represents an important provision within the student volleyball landscape.

The 2019-20 Student Cup competition saw first time champions crowned as Coventry University claimed the men's title and University of East Anglia claimed the women's title.

### U15, U16 AND U18 CHAMPIONSHIPS

The U18 and U16 National Championships were at the finals stage when the impact of the coronavirus took hold. Urmston Grammar

were due to take on Richmond in the U16 Girls' competition, with Richmond vs Boswells in the U16 Boys' Final. In the U18 Women's final, Richmond were due to take on Tameside, and in the Men's Final Black Country were due to take on either Boswells or Cherwell. We still hope these matches will be concluded out in the community, as this would be the best outcome for all the juniors involved. The U15 National Championship was paused at the point of the last 8s, and Volleyball England will be investigating opportunities to complete the competition in a one-day tournament.

### INTER REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The cancellation of the Inter Regionals has been a real blow to regional junior competitions. For many, the Inter Regionals is the highlight of the season, so it has been a real shame to not see it go ahead in 2020. Unfortunately, the format of the competition does not make it easy to restage on future weekends, as it usually runs over three days on a bank holiday. Further investigation is needed to determine whether it is possible to run the competition in 2020.

We do not yet know the full extent to which the coronavirus will impact volleyball or indeed whether next season will be unaffected. We will prepare for different scenarios and be ready to help people get back to playing volleyball once government guidance allows it. 🐦

▲ Almost 100 players paid to take part in Volleyball England sitting volleyball competitions this season.



# COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Stewart Thorpe explains the fresh focus to our communications



▲ Stewart Thorpe

January 2020 marked the start of a new focus for Volleyball England's communications as content took over from marketing as the driving force behind a more member-centric approach.

As a result, more attention has shifted to Volleyball England's own platforms – volleyballengland.org, social media and the Time Out newsletter – over external channels. This change has led to a greater focus on storytelling, through pictures, video and words, to help bring the community's clubs and characters to life. It has also reemphasised our role as a valuable source of information-sharing.

Our members are key to a more sustainable future for volleyball in this country and our communications must therefore be better aligned to their needs to deliver better value.

## FEEDBACK

After joining Volleyball England in January, I reached out to collect as much feedback as I could on the organisation's communications. One recurring message was that Volleyball England was not effective at communicating with individual members. A key stakeholder in one region explained they felt the onus was on them to monitor the website for major announcements, because we were not trying to extend the reach of these messages beyond our website or social media pages.

VolleyZone is allowing us to work smarter to send out more targeted emails on specific topics. For example, since the beginning of March, all regional chairs have received the latest coronavirus guidance to their inbox as it is issued. A balance is required to ensure people are not overloaded with information and, with the help of VolleyZone, we are working to ensure the right messages get to the right people.

▼ Volleyball coach Joel Banks (left) pictured with Matthew Rodgers, Communications Coordinator at CEV.



**“OUR DIGITAL HOME – VOLLEYBALLENGLAND.ORG – IS THE GO-TO PORTAL FOR ANYONE SEEKING INFORMATION ON THE SPORT IN THIS COUNTRY”**

## VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND'S SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING

Platform	Following
Facebook:	12,503
Instagram:	3,827
LinkedIn:	1,250
Twitter:	14,900
YouTube:	1,250

## DIGITAL NEWSROOM

To try to extend the reach of our communications, we have established Volleyball England's own 'digital newsroom'. As we command a large audience across our digital channels, we have the opportunity to become a publisher and to plan and regularly publish our own educational, informative and entertaining content to keep that audience engaged. Additionally, to further increase the size of that audience, we have rebooted the Volleyball England LinkedIn and Instagram pages after periods of inactivity.

Before the disruptive impact of the coronavirus, there were early signs that this approach was working too. In January and February 2020, pageviews for news items on volleyballengland.org were up 35 and 55%, respectively, when compared to the previous year. We hope this is a taste of things to come.

## VOLLEYBALLENGLAND.ORG

Our digital home – volleyballengland.org – is the go-to portal for anyone seeking information on the sport in this country and where the bulk of our activity has been focussed.

In the last financial year it has featured articles on: Richmond VC's funding success; Joel Banks, the English head coach of the Finnish national team; and the story of how one of the country's youngest affiliated clubs, Stafford Knights, was created. There have been updates on our international athletes, major announcements and extended articles providing more detail behind such decisions as the introduction of VolleyZone and new player registration fees. Some of these topics have been challenging to write about, but we are committed to being transparent.



◀ On our website, the University of East Anglia Women's Team reflected on their journey to winning the Student Cup.

We understand volleyballengland.org can be tricky to navigate at times – after all, it was built at a time when there was a bigger Hub team to manage it – and we are slowly working to improve the user experience.

## SOCIAL MEDIA, VIDEO & TIME OUT

Across our social media channels we've seen an increase in our following and hope to see that continue as we look to increasingly treat them as publishing platforms in their own rights rather than as vehicles to share website articles.

While reading about volleyball is entertaining, if you can't get to a match we know that nothing beats watching it. At the end of 2018/19 season the video live streaming production came in-house for Cup Finals and it was fantastic to see so many people tune in total we racked up 16,500 views.

Finally, our monthly member newsletter, Time Out, is regularly sharing news to some 5,000 subscribers.



▲ Our announcement that the England Girls made history by winning silver at the NEVZA U17 Championships was one of the most read stories this year.

## CORONAVIRUS

The coronavirus pandemic challenged Volleyball England's communications and led us to adapt our approach as the situation evolved. We started by issuing guidance on small measures to minimise the risk of passing on the virus – and were featured on BBC Radio for it – and later released a series of unprecedented statements to cancel Volleyball England events. At that point, our communications became even more important as we tried to keep the community engaged, active and informed of change. We issued advice to struggling clubs, tried to keep people moving through volleyball-inspired home workouts and social media campaigns (#digginginthegarden and #VolleyRoundTheWorld) and organised our first ever webinar. During a difficult

## SUMMARY

Recently we've started to see Volleyball England's approach to communications change. We're looking to add more value to our membership offer by better serving our members' needs. With the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games around the corner, there are opportunities to be more ambitious, but we must first consolidate and build stronger foundations.

Metrics for our digital communications are now being recorded differently, which means that, come next year, we'll be in better position to analyse the bigger picture and see if those early signs were proof of even better things to come. Before then, we are confident that members will start to see and experience these improvements for themselves. 🐦

If you want to keep abreast of all Volleyball England news, make sure you follow our social media accounts and subscribe to our monthly newsletter.



# REGIONAL REPORTS

Updates from the nine volleyball regions on what has taken place in the last year

## NORTH EAST

Secretary: Sue Sowden Web: [www.facebook.com/northeastvolleyball](http://www.facebook.com/northeastvolleyball)

### PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENTS

Newcastle VC's successful move to the Eagles Community Centre, home to the most successful team in British basketball history, as well as securing funding have been two of the region's proudest moments. By moving to a new venue, the club has been allowed to grow and gain many more members playing volleyball. Instead of three teams, the club now has five. Add those squads together and there are more than 100 club members, which is double the size of the membership at the club's former home, Newburn.

Durham University Men and Women's side and Northumbria Men were also due to contest the BUCS finals before it was cancelled.



### BIGGEST CHALLENGES

We're struggling to find volunteers willing to take on roles. This begins in the clubs, who inform us of their own difficulty, then for our two area associations – the Northern Counties Volleyball Association and the Tees Valley Volleyball Association – and finally to our regional association which is really struggling currently and is in need of a new chair.

### SHORT AND LONG-TERM AIMS

In the short-term we need to recruit more volunteers to sit on the regional committee. In the long-term we want to form regional junior squads and secure funding to be able to enter them in national competitions.



## NORTH WEST

Chair: Phil Chanin Web: [www.volleyballnorthwest.co.uk](http://www.volleyballnorthwest.co.uk)

### PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENTS

A resurgent North West junior programme has continued to grow across the region. The focus of both the boys and girls programme is to increase the engagement with regional clubs and to grow the number of clubs sending players to development sessions. The junior sessions have engaged with players from 14 different clubs from across the region.

Our 2019 Christmas fundraising tournament had representatives from all North West counties, with 12 teams entering. The event raised money to help support the regional junior programme and showed people's willingness to support the programme.

### BIGGEST CHALLENGES

To maintain engagement with all volleyball activity throughout the region. The North West has a reasonable online presence; however, this needs to remain active and relevant to the varying needs across the region.

The Lancashire area has no active volleyball league currently and the region is working with a few new clubs to provide competition as well as looking into the possibility of linking it into the



CREDIT: PHIL GIBBIN

Greater Manchester League.

### SHORT AND LONG-TERM GOALS

To work with Greater Manchester to strengthen its committee structure and increase the number of teams participating in the league. To offer support to the clubs in the Lancashire area to develop teams to enter area league competition next season. To continue to build wider participation opportunities into the North West junior training sessions by engaging with clubs and by having junior players return to their clubs to sell the sessions to their teammates.

## YORKSHIRE

Chair: Tim Godson Web: [www.yorkshirevolleyball.org.uk](http://www.yorkshirevolleyball.org.uk)

### REGIONAL OVERVIEW

The NVL was cut short with Leeds RGA Men's at the top of Division 1 and the Women's side in 2nd place in Division 1. The number of women's NVL teams grew as Doncaster Miners entered a team into Division 3. In total there are six men's and seven women's NVL sides from Yorkshire.

Yorkshire runs regional leagues at three levels and there was a welcome return by Bradford Friends in the Men's Championship. Hull and East



CREDIT: STEVE SMITH

Yorkshire run a successful local league with eight mixed teams.

On the beach front, the Yorkshire series continues to grow as the region hosted UKBT events, which were organised by Skyball Beach VC. In sitting volleyball, Sheffield VC continue to represent the region.

### BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS

We have set up two junior training squads, one representing the North and West and the other the South and West clubs in the region. These were due to come together as Yorkshire to train for the Inter Regional Championships, which were cancelled. Teams were entered into Volleyball England's junior age-grade competitions with great success. York Men's U18 side reached the last eight while Leeds RGA reached the last eight unbeaten. Several of the juniors successful in being selected to join the England Talent Pathway programme. Yorkshire also took part in the inaugural Beach Inter Regional Championship and is developing beach training squads.





# WEST MIDLANDS

Chair: Kara Griffiths Web: [www.wmva.org.uk](http://www.wmva.org.uk)

## PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

I took over as Chair of the WMVA at the start of this season. So much of what we have done has been about reflection, consolidating the fantastic work done so far and defining our strategic priorities for the coming period. Having said that, a particularly proud moment was seeing over 60 volleyballers of all ages come together for the first ever WMVA Awards Evening last June. We wanted to hold an event to both present trophies to senior league winners but also to recognise the amazing efforts of our regional junior squads.

## SHORT AND LONG-TERM AIMS

We began the year with a survey of clubs to ensure we were on the right path and that the work being done by the executive committee was targeted in the right way. With only a small volunteer workforce, it was important to understand where we should concentrate our efforts.

Therefore, our priorities are now to: run and manage the regional league successfully; coordinate the activity of our regional junior squads; and promote West Midlands volleyball to a wider audience.

Our short and long-term aims fall within this: develop our inter-regional squads to continue to be competitive, win championships and develop players; expand the number of teams engaged in league



CREDIT: PHIL GIBBIN

activity in the region; and harness any opportunities which may assist us to achieve those two aims.

Long-term, we clearly have an aspiration to build visibility of the game regionally as a direct result of the Commonwealth Games taking place in Birmingham.

## BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Of course, the coronavirus crisis has had a catastrophic effect on many aspects of life and our regional volleyball activity has been no exception to this. Normally, with any challenge, I would talk about next steps and how we find opportunities, even in testing times. However, as I write this, we simply have no idea when or how the lockdown might end. Until then, our volleyball activity, like so much else, remains on hold – with us all looking forward to the promise of brighter days.

# EAST MIDLANDS

Chair: Paul Kaerger Web: [www.eastmidlandsvolleyball.weebly.com](http://www.eastmidlandsvolleyball.weebly.com)

## PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

Securing significant junior funding and being able to run a young leaders course with a group of U15 players. We have also planned a young referee course, which will be rescheduled for next season, and purchased new kit for local junior teams.

We have strong adult leagues for men and woman with 10 men's teams and nine women's teams and the competition has been fun, exciting and of a good quality.

## BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Retention and increasing the number of older junior boys in the U17 category. Players in this age range seem to struggle with having multiple commitments, including studies, which leave them unable to take part in the programme.

Increasing coaching personnel within the junior development programme and enabling coaches to become suitably qualified. This is a mix of people committing time consistently, arranging courses to give them the skills to develop and creating a coherent pathway for coaches.



Reduction in the number of junior teams in the region entering the national championships due to the introduction of a player fee.

## SHORT AND LONG-TERM AIMS

Our aims are around junior development. As a regional association, we see that as our primary goal. We are looking to increase the number of players and the number of coaches who can help develop junior volleyball. Additionally, we want to equip our junior players where possible through young leader and refereeing courses.

# EASTERN

Secretary: Frances Balaam

## PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENTS

This year there were 18 teams (11 men's and 7 women's) from the region that competed in the NVL – an increase of five from the previous year. On a regional level, teams competed in the ever-popular Eastern Region Volleyball Series, which is organised by the Norfolk Volleyball Association. Five county associations also provided league competitions for players.

Between October and February, Essex and Suffolk provided regular junior coaching, which also benefited players from neighbouring counties. These development camps have made a huge impact on our budding players.

Competing in the Grand Prix Series, Essex Pirates SVC provided sitting volleyball opportunities to players from the Eastern region – several of these players have gone on to train with the GB Women's Team.

## BIGGEST CHALLENGE

One of the biggest challenges we face is the time that our volunteers, particularly coaches and referees, can put into the sport as they try to



CREDIT: PHIL GIBBIN

balance their work/home life. Suitable venues in some counties are also an issue.

## WHAT ARE THE REGION'S SHORT AND LONG-TERM AIMS?

We hope to increase the number of coaches and referees over the next two years to keep the sport going within our region. We also need to build the committee and develop a strategy. We currently have two vacant positions, Chairperson and Treasurer, within the Eastern Volleyball Association.

# SOUTH EAST

Chair: John Biddiscombe Secretary: Freda Bussey

Web: [www.southeastvolleyball.co.uk](http://www.southeastvolleyball.co.uk)

## REGIONAL OVERVIEW

The region's leagues, which provide competition for 150 teams, continue to go from strength to strength. Of these teams, there are 44 women's teams competing in dedicated leagues with another 21 mixed teams. There are now 20 teams from the region that compete in the NVL, a slight decrease on the previous year.

While junior and local league volleyball continue to grow in the region, we must ask ourselves whether this is at the expense of NVL participation, and whether that is a good or bad thing for regional development. We feel it is important to have a full player development pathway, for juniors to learn the game, get their first taste of competition and progress to local league teams, regional age group competitions and eventually the NVL.

## PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

The U14 Grand Prix has continued to grow, and it is pleasing to see young athletes playing in national age group competitions and moving into the regional squads. Our junior beach teams went to the inaugural Inter-Regional Beach Volleyball Championships, placing a creditable 4th in the women's event and 3rd in the men's. The region



also had five players selected for the Home Nations Beach Tournament.

## SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM AMBITIONS

We will continue to run regular referee and coaching courses, but we need to look at support once someone has qualified. Long-term we need to find ways to support and develop newly qualified coaches. This could be running Volleyball Futures events, additional workshops, opportunities to work with regional squads or mentoring.

We will continue to build the U14 Grand Prix and the next logical step would be to introduce a competition for the next age group up. ▶



# LONDON

Chair: Gary Beckford Web: [www.londonvolleyball.org.uk](http://www.londonvolleyball.org.uk)

Key to our future success is to build on the firm foundations that we have in place – having places to play, people to deliver and the pathways for all to succeed – which will help us to continue our growth. Juniors are supported at school, clubs are supported with facilities and officials, recreational players are supported with pay-and-play sessions and tournaments, and there is an elite pathway in place. In total 13 London juniors received 16 national call-ups in the last 12 months.

During the last 12 months, the London Volleyball Association presided over approximately 400 matches in the London League, which offers opportunities for NVL standard players as well as new and intermediate teams in the lower divisions. The league has seen an increase in the number of teams and a levelling-off on the number of registered players.

London's ability to host significant volleyball events in the capital has been a major success and we have had involvement in a number of these events: CEV Beach, CEV European Cup, LYG School Games, London Youth Games, LYG Primary Games and Police Sport UK.



CREDIT: STEVE SMITH.

We have had a big drive to increase the competitive opportunities for junior volleyball in London through a series of Grand Prix events at three different age groups for boys and girls - U12/U15/U18. Over 350 players participated in regular junior tournaments. These have proved to be increasingly popular and, together with the popular volleyball manga series Haikyuu, have contributed to a surge in the junior interest in volleyball across London.

We will develop an achievable and ambitious plan for Volleyball in London that will be able to cater for current uncertainties and our future aspirations.

# SOUTH WEST

Chair: Dave Reece Secretary: Ron Richards Web: [www.swva.org.uk](http://www.swva.org.uk)

## PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

The South West Volleyball Association was founded in 1969, so this season was our 50th anniversary. It was great to see current and former members and officers meet at our celebration evening in November. Some had been involved right through our 50 years, others for not so long. It does, however, highlight the importance of our volunteers, who have made, and continue to make, organised volleyball possible across our geographically spread region. We are pleased to have been able to provide a range of senior and junior regional competitions and to have



been able to crown winners and runners up for our senior leagues – congratulations to Exeter Storm and Cheltenham & Gloucester (Men) and Taunton Kidz and Torexe (Women). Our regional junior squad training programmes are well organised, with a full team of coaches and committed young players.

## BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Maintaining and growing the sport with no external financial support and a limited volunteer force. Not a challenge, but a regret that our regional junior squads which have trained hard all season will not have the opportunity to represent the region at the Inter Regional Championships.

## SHORT AND LONG-TERM AMBITIONS

In the short-term, we need to support clubs through these current difficult circumstances and try, when allowed and relevant, to provide regular competitions as soon as possible. We can only hope that not too many clubs fold or cut back their programmes because of financial difficulties. The ongoing and long-term aim will be to broaden our volunteer base to offer more competitive, coaching and refereeing opportunities – particularly to encourage younger volunteers and support them with more senior mentors.



# THANK YOU

Volleyball in this country owes a huge amount to the fantastic network of volunteers, sponsors and key partners that support its delivery and development. Volleyball would not be the same without your backing, so thank you.



## Governance statement

Volleyball England is committed to ensuring we comply with Sport England and UK Sport's Code of Governance. The code provides guidance on how to ensure we are open and transparent and that we ensure members and stakeholders can access important information, to improve accountability and stakeholder engagement. For Volleyball England's Annual Governance Statement, visit: [www.volleyballengland.org/about\\_us/about\\_us/governance](http://www.volleyballengland.org/about_us/about_us/governance)

[www.volleyballengland.org](http://www.volleyballengland.org)



