Bristol Ladies 1 were looking to introduce new players to raise their level for Division 1, as well as test their "old" team in this new challenging top division. Unfortunately, the unavailability of the strong middle Weronika Zarzycka and other absences saw the line up changed and the bench reduced. However, the refurbished wing side with Joanna Zefron added some threatening attacks throughout the whole match.

The BVC girls started nervously, with poor passing and some free errors whilst the opposition showed immediate consistency all around, especially in defense. The set yielded a refreshing turnaround towards the latter stages, unfortunately with an injury to the Cardiff main middle attacker. Team South Wales took the set home 25:16.

Set two was played with more energy, determination, positive attitude and smart serving by the whole BVC Team. They were able to produce a heartening run of points to the extent where it seemed this set was a win even at the early stages. In the end, it turned out a bit closer than it originally anticipated, as Bristol won 26:28.

The strong start and deserved finish of set two was punctuated by short, frequent and costly moments of lack of concentration in the few next rallies. Again, poor passing from Bristol was affecting the game distribution of their setter Cinzia, unable to utilise quick middle attacks rather than their outside power game. Team South Wales pulled off some easy interception with their efficient block-defense correlation to take the set home with 25:17.

The final set saw a repeat of a concentration slump on the Bristol side where energy waned after positive outcomes from good blocking and strong spikes. This set would see their substitution setter Vicky Telfer overcome a nervous start after which she showed her potential with fine trajectories in four, however this wasn’t enough as Team South Wales won the final set at 25:18.

It was good to see the Bristol girls scrambling well and working together at the end of the last two sets when they clawed some points back to narrow the Team South Wales lead. With the overall team fitness level increasing, work on the foundation skills and team bonding, the next match will certainly see more performance consistency.
Saturday 22\textsuperscript{nd} September 2012

Bristol 1 vs Reading Aces

Result: 25:19 25:15 25:12 (3-0)

On 22\textsuperscript{nd} September the Bristol Ladies 1 hosted their second game of the season against Reading Aces at Abbeywood Community School. After putting up a good fight the weekend before, Bristol showed clear determination to win this game in 3 sets.

Both sides showed what they were made off in the first round of points. Bristol were then able to establish a lead with some strong hits from the outside, and great blocking off the opposing attack. The set went to Bristol 25:19.

The second set had a promising start for Reading Aces, as they served 4 points at Bristol, who were not able to get into the run of things. However with the serve finally switching sides, Bristol quickly gained strength and points. The opposition however was clearly fighting, keeping focused and high spirited throughout. The Bristol side fought back with some clean Volleyball and led the rest of the set to win with 25:15.

In the final set, Vicky Telfer swapped the position of setter with Cinzia Craighero. Starting a little wobbly on their feet, Sarah Baos turned around the focus of the team with a fantastic rescue, keeping the ball in play from well beyond the court markings. The team followed up with a steady flow of points, and with that the final exchanges saw Ines Schmidt coming to the outside for Joanna Zefron. The team displayed great consistency throughout the rest of the set, taking the game home in the final set with a 25:12 win.

It was good to see the Bristol girls showing consistency, determination and steadiness in this second game. Further work on strategic play, next to foundational skills and feeling comfortable in play, should make the future challenges start to become even more exciting.
Sunday 30th September 2012

South Hants v Bristol 1


With the support of a large home crowd, South Hants' season got off to a bold start in a challenging match against new entrants to the division, Bristol 1. Both teams appeared to get straight into the game and were closely matched for most of the first set. Building on their practice in the weeks before the match, the home team worked hard and strong serving from Michelle Rex helped the set to close at 25 – 21 to South Hants.

In the second set South Hants were ahead throughout, with good serving from the team and dominating attacking from Blanka Wood, the set went to South Hants 25 – 15. In a total turnaround, Bristol had the edge in the third set with very long run of serves from Nicola Breaks helping the side to win the set 25 – 16.

South Hants struggled to recover their form, losing the fourth set 25 – 12, but with encouragement from coach Bev Cooper, they managed to revive their spirits, and show their experience, taking the fifth set 15 – 13 to narrowly win the match 3:2.

Overall a good win for South Hants. Fantastic hitting and blocking from Natalie Patrick in her first national league match, and a promising opening to the season from all the team. Well done to everyone and huge thanks to our supporters.
Bristol Ladies 1 faced Loughborough Dolphins on the 27th October 2012 on home turf. The starting lineup of Cinzia Graighero as the setter, Sarah Baos as Libero, Ines Schmidt and Joanna Zefron as Outside, Caroline Dale and Weronika Zarzycka as Middle and Izabella Batog as Opposite pulled away in the first set with great control, focus and powerful attacking through the outside and opposite. Great consistency allowed them to take the set 25:19.

The second set was once again started strongly by the Bristol team, but some of the focus seemed to fade when the opposition managed to scramble back what had looked to be winners. Ewa Gapinska joined the first six at the midpoint, exchanging for Ines Schmidt, on the outside. Loughborough gained a couple of points lead and at the end were able to pull around the second set to beat Bristol 25:23.

The loss of the second set seemed to have fazed the Bristol Ladies as they entered into the 3rd set as they were unable to find any traction from the start. The Coach, Francesco Reso, decided on some changes early in the game, seeing Vicky Telfer coming up as first setter, and Ewa Gapinska coming in on the Outside again. Still the team was not finding their spirit and soon the 16th point buzzer rang with Loughborough pinning down Bristol under the 10 point mark. There was to be no comeback in this set, as Bristol went down 25:12.

In the fourth set Bristol really had to change their approach, if they wanted to stand a chance of winning. They reverted back to the starting line-up from set 1, determined not to let any point drop without a fight. However Loughborough’s number 3 was serving strongly at the start of the set and leaving the Bristol defense scratching their heads. However with a new found second wind, Bristol found the spirit to break the spell. After a time out at 17:23 and a strong attack through the outside by Joanna Zefron, the team was able to bring the set to conclusion with a win of 25:21.

So the match needed to be decided in the Tie Break. Bristol’s confidence certainly shined through as they were able to hold a small lead over the opposition from the start. Still Loughborough kept their strong play up. Bristol on the other side were fighting, the defense now not letting up under the lead of Sarah Baos (Libero) and some cleverly played balls through the middle by Weronika Zarzycka. At midpoint the coach used the new tactic to keep the pressure through the front by adding Vicky Telfer as backcourt setter and Ewa Gapinska as front court opposite. A final serve by Caroline Dale, followed by a backcourt attack from Ines Schmidt brought the game to a conclusion and relief for the home team at 15:12.
Sunday 25th November 2012

Reading Aces v Newcastle (Staffs) Ladies

Result: 24:26 22:25 23:25 (0-3)

Reading Aces ladies hosted their second home game of this season at Kendrick School against the leaders of the Division 1 league table – Newcastle Staffs.

Reading Aces, who only had 6 players, started well and played some clever volleyball to match Newcastle’s level of play. Both parties made few mistakes making the first set very intense, with some long rallies courtesy of great defensive play from both teams. Reading Aces took a lead towards the end of the first set but excellent and powerful attacking from Newcastle Staffs finished the set 24-26 in favour of the guests.

In the second set Aces struggled to perform and made many unforced errors giving Newcastle a comfortable 8 point lead. However, the demonstrated their fighting spirit and almost managed to peg Staffs back. It was just a little too late and unfortunately they see it through, as Staffs finished the set 22-25.

Aces started the third set with a higher level of play, and even took an early lead. However the girls made a few serve-reception mistakes and couldn’t keep the lead allowing Newcastle Staffs to take over. Again, it was a close set 23-25.

Despite the loss, Reading Aces’s coach Lyes Sola wasn’t too disappointed with the result; “The scores reflected the fighting spirit and proved the improvement of the whole team in all areas. With only 6 players available, they were left without any options to change things, which may have had an effect on the result.”
Bristol played Northampton at the weekend in Abbeywood School, Bristol. After a slow start by the Bristol ladies, they were able to pull to victory in 3:1 sets.

Northampton came into the game from the beginning showing determination and a winning spirit as they entered into the first set. They kept their defences up against the Bristol team and were not going to let points slip away. Even though Bristol managed to run them in at the end of the set, a missed serve by Bristol at the final point meant a set and advantage to Northampton.

The Ladies from Bristol now knew that they had to play much better together in order to win this. With a tall middle now in place, the team came into their stride and were able to push to a win in the second set, this time finishing the set on a perfect serve.

Both teams knew that they had to up their game in order to stand a chance in winning. Bristol were now attacking strongly with Northampton on the other side holding strong in defence, countering with attacks on their own. At the end Bristol were able to hang on to their lead and won the third set.

With the score now being in favour of the Bristol ladies, the team were pushing on with their advantage, with better organization of their defence and attack. Northampton managed to stay with Bristol until midway through the set. This was helped by mistakes on the Bristol side. However, finding points via the front court attack, Bristol won the set, and the match. The Bristol Captain said after the match “Midway through the season, Bristol still have a long way to go to perform to their maximum; we are in second gear and have a lot more to give.”
The first set had been dominated by the hosts and it took RAVC a while to warm up. In the second set strong serving from RAVC’s Christine Brown secured an early lead. They kept the lead allowing them to win second set. In the third set RAVC dominated the game by showing strong serve-receive and good team spirit. RAVC started strongly in the fourth set but serve-receive weakened letting Northampton to take the lead. With this lead Northampton won confidence and put RAVC under pressure. However RAVC’s Ally Newman nr 5 served well at the end of the set levelling 24-24. Teams were matching each other point by point 24-24, 25-25, 26-26, showing incredible fighting spirit but it wasn’t enough to win fourth set. In the tie-break Northampton tactically targeted their attacks on Ally Newman nr 5 restricting RAVC’s setter to distribute the balls. Strong hitting from Helen Dirig nr 6 kept RAVC one point down at the change-over (8-7). A few reception errors allowed Northampton to take a lead 8-12. But solid and strong serve from Ally Newman, nr 5 and clever hitting by Anastasia Antipina nr 3 and Diane Szmidt nr 8 brought RAVC from 11-14 behind to a fabulous win 14-16! Well-deserved and well needed win for Reading Aces!
RAVC travelled to Tameside, Manchester, on Saturday, 2nd of March. Despite a four hour journey RAVC started first set confidently and took an early lead and kept it till around 18-18. Unfortunately series of bad receives allowed Tameside to win first set.

In the second set the RAVC girls took more risk on the serve, which unfortunately didn't pay off. A combination of a lack of confidence and smart roll shots from Tameside allowed the hosts to take the second set.

Although Tameside had a 2-0 lead, the experience of RAVC took the initiative in the third set, showing the opponents that match wasn't over. RAVC continued dominating with strong and clever serves, putting Tameside under pressure. Tameside lost control of the game, with clever hitting from Marcela Bletzer and a strong defence allowing RAVC to triumph in the third and fourth set.

In the beginning of the fifth RAVC made a few unforced errors, which harmed their confidence, resulting in a convincing 15-3 win for Tameside.
Saturday 6th April  2013

 Bristol 1 vs Tameside

 Result: 25:22 25:15 25:21 (3-0)

The first time these teams met in the North of England earlier this year, Bristol struggled to find their feet. On this occasion, it was a well anticipated match by the home team in Abbeywood School, and was also Bristol’s last home match for the season.

This time the home team approached the game relaxed, but focused on the task at hand. The Bristol ladies took control from the beginning and kept the pressure up on the opposition throughout the game. Tameside had to accept defeat in 3:0 sets.

Captain Joanna Zefron commented after the match, “It was a great game today. We came out fighting and were ready for Tameside. They played well, but we were ready for them. I’m really proud of how everyone stepped up. It was a great way to finish our last home game of the season.”

Coach Francisco Riso was equally pleased with the win, “A well deserved win after a good improvement of the single and team performance, also covering key absences with Division 2 players.”

It was a well deserved win by the home team, which due to injuries also relied on W2 players integrating very well into the game. Bristol EW now looking to the next weekend ahead, where they will be playing Northampton as the last game for this season finishing, their debut in Division 1.
Reading Aces travelled to Newcastle under Lyme, Staffordshire to play the penultimate match of the season on last.

The ladies national league team were in fighting spirit as a win would secure their position in Division 1 again next year. Although coach Lyes Sola could not be at the match, he had all the confidence in the team for a win. The team, captained by Christine Brown, took the first set 25-10 although a few service errors in the middle of the set gave the team something to improve in the next set.

Reading Aces started strongly in the second set with powerful and consistent serving dominating the host team. The experienced RAVC exploited the fragile Newcastle defence taking the set 25-14.

In the third set RAVC took an early lead with powerful serving from setter, Mirjam Helmschrott-Bowden, forcing the Newcastle coach to take an early time-out at 5-1. The Reading Aces team continued to stretch their lead through accurate defence by Karen Versluys and dominated the net with deep hitting cross court hits from Anastasia Antipina. There was also some good blocking and intelligent play from middle Vicky Currer-Briggs. The RAVC team took the last set and the match 18-25.