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Subject: Latest Sussex Men's Open League Newsletter - 25 November
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To:

BH

Dear All

What a beautiful day for hockey - sunshine throughout the day, warm enough in the sun, but definitely Down coat temperatures in the shade and as the sun went down. Certainly allowed players to run around to keep warm while one or two of the umpires in the later games looked a little chilled. I made the point to one of my umpire colleagues that wearing a dark coat and black gloves when umpiring under lights does not help their fellow umpire or the players see their decisions. Let's look out the warm bright coloured jackets for the rest of the winter.

Sorry - distracted while typing for a few minutes while Gemma A was strutting her stuff on the Strictly dance floor. Not the best of her dances - but she looked good in red.

Frost on the ground this morning and so glad to see that none of the Open League games were lost due to the state of the morning pitches. I did have my 1630 ladies game at the Triangle called off due to safety issues - first time this season for me.

On playing conditions - I am unsure what the lights are like around the grounds in the County, but certainly both the Triangle and St Pauls in Burgess Hill have weak lights. A number of the pylons have missing lights. One of the end pylons at St Pauls as only 1 out of 3 lights working and this is opposite another pylon where only 2 out of 3 lights are on - so not surprising when the umpires struggle to make some key decisions. Not dangerous for the 3 pm games - but I feel if the clubs are paying big money for the lights they deserve to have them well maintained. I am unsure if other Centres have similar situations to Falmer (Sussex Uni) where they have 2 settings for the lights weak and not so weak (almost good enough). If so may be worth asking those in charge to turn up the power. Please let me know of any grounds where the lights are marginal or unacceptable or even where they are great.

All the results in on time - in fact nice and early for the vast majority - very much appreciated. I have also been getting a good response on division 1 scorers this season to date. I know I have had to chase some of the teams for the scorers on a Sunday, but at least this season I have had responses from all those teams - not the case last year - again this is very much appreciated.

My ever hard working colleague, Fred Brotherton, has sent me the latest analysis of MRS returns. Overall I feel the teams are doing much better this season and so I hope for a much lower level of fines. However, I have sent a note to the few teams who have failed to return their Match Sheets in the hope they will double check their sports bags and find them and get them to Fred quickly. A couple of teams are at risk of point deductions, one of these in a divisional topping position - always a shame to miss out on promotion due to an administration slip-up.

When looking at the match sheet returns, as we do, we note some changes of teams is taking place as players develop and teams need to be re-balanced. This is to be expected and as long as the movements of players are within reason and are consistent that is fine and to be expected. However, as one club already has done, if there are doubts on the player movements please ask me for guidance - and while I do not wish to "select" teams hopefully together we can avoid disaster.

Sadly Penguin 2s failed to field a side this Saturday for the 4th time this season, and so I will be expunging their results from the table for the season to date. I still hope that Penguins will be able to fulfil a few of their matches as friendlies, but more on this during the coming week. I know it is a real struggle for some of our clubs to get out their lower teams and the efforts made week in and week out to get the games played is very much appreciated. I stress if a club is having problems - please let me and their opposition know early as there may be assistance we can give.

In division 1 - Hailsham 1s took the honours in the top of the table clash with Penguin 1s, to take a 3 point lead, with just a couple of Saturdays to go in the first half of the season. Both teams have to play Brighton and Hove 3s in the next 2 weekends - so interesting games ahead. Also coming up next week is a local derby between Middies 1 and 2s next Saturday - hopefully I will be able to get back from Eastbourne in time to watch some of this clash of the Titans.

Still early days, but I have pencilled in April 14th as the Division 1 play-off day. This is to be organised by Kent and so we are in their hands re confirmation of the date and the location of this match.

In Division 2 - the top 4 teams won and so the order is unchanged and Worthing 2's remain on top, 5 points ahead of second placed Eastbourne 3s. Hailsham 2's are making a run up the table, being undefeated in the last 5 weekends. The bottom 3 sides remain tied together with 3 points each - with some tough games ahead for each of these teams - hard times in deed.

With Lewes 4s not playing today - Eastbourne 4s took the opportunity to leapfrog them to the top of the table. However, as I remove the Penguin 2s results, I am unsure what will happen to the placings. Still 3 weeks to go for the division and probably will need all of those games to get clarity on the end of first half season

In the top of the table clash in Division 4, Saxons 4s took the honours against Lewes 5s and are now 3 points ahead, but Lewes still have a game in hand. Again with 3 weeks to go and with the varying games to unwind, will be interesting to see where all the teams are at the end of the first half.

Any way - Strictly has finished, Micheal McIntrye is well underway (very funny and embarrassing) and I am testing out a South Eastern Australian Shiraz - purchased at a very reasonable price from Lids. A rich fruity little number - may even buy it again. So time to finish for another Saturday and relax for the rest of the evening. Hopefully you all are having a relaxing and enjoyable evening.

Best

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