

Tennis tour de force in Musselburgh

It's an ill-wind that blows nobody any good and one-time anti-social behaviour centred around the Musselburgh tennis courts in Lewisvale Park is proof positive.

As community police officer for the area Robbie Stewart was called to investigate and in the course of his duties he met part-time tennis club player/coach, Kevin Duffy, coincidentally a fellow constable.

"Kevin and I realised we had more than police work in common" said Robbie, adding:

"We had both played tennis at the Thistle club in previous times before Kevin moved with his family to Pinkie and my current role took me to Musselburgh.

"He persuaded me to dig my racquets out of the attic and come along to practice sessions where I found the club to be so friendly that my love of the sport was re-kindled after being suspended for the birth of my son."

So much so that Robbie, current 1st team captain, became part of a near 10 year tour-de-force that has seen Musselburgh men traverse all the way from the bottom of the VMH Solicitors East League pyramid to Division Two.

What's more they have done so unbeaten over 70 matches, a run only punctuated by a draw away to St Serfs 2nds in the season

just ended.

It is a success story both on and off the court, as Robbie, who believes this to be unique in the annals of East League tennis, explains.

“Things started to happen when the club took over the running of the facilities from East Lothian Council. Prior to that courts had to be booked over the internet and keys to play collected from the local sports centre.

“Under the direction of president Sean Elliott four courts that were falling into disrepair began operating as under the auspices of charity status giving access to grants that allowed for a new artificial clay surface with floodlighting.

“Next step is a new clubhouse which has been delayed by Covid etc – but we’ll get there.

“One of the things we are most pleased about is the fact our core squad of eight players (six are required for matches) are almost exclusively locals with the only real ‘commuter’ Ollie Curtis who travels from Bonnyrigg.”

It is a condition of selection that players must be regular attendees at practice sessions – a rule that is likely to be reinforced.

“Now that we are entering the elite level of the leagues there is an awareness some quality players on the East side of Edinburgh who play elsewhere are beginning to take note and perhaps throwing their hats in with us.

“First and foremost we will remain a community club though with any success regarded as a bonus.”

As well as spearheading Musselburgh’s drive up the leagues as doubles partners Robbie and Kevin have another goal – to win the British Police Championship being held in Wales later this summer.

And 'burgh's tennis success doesn't end there; the women's first team have gained promotion to Division Three with the 2nd team due to break new ground in Division Five, also in 2024.



Men's team at Musselburgh Pictured, left to right, after the latest promotion are: Ollie Curtis, Jonny Gray, Robbie Stewart (captain), Kevin Duffy, Hughie Masters and George Grey jnr.