

Summary of key issues to address for a successful County Closed event.

Reflections from Hampshire County Squash...

In 2016 The Hampshire County Closed event attracted approximately 70 players with an A Draw of 12 a B draw of 24 a C draw of 12 and a D draw of 12, plus an over 45 draw of 8. 8 and 16 draws are ideal and aimed for with an O35 event being considered to balance the numbers. This was eventually discounted so that players were able to play in their desired grade.

The success of the County Closed Tournament is a reflection of many years of activity by the organiser Stuart Summers. Below is a list of key issues necessary to attract participants and to ensure a successful event (in no particular order):

- The January weekend sometimes has a better turnout, but the decision has been based on club availability, the organiser having the relevant free weekend, Intercounty activity and any sponsor requirements. The October weekend is helpful for County rankings whereas the January weekend should have more players already match fit.
- A minimum of 4 courts is imperative for the number of entrants which limits Hampshire to four clubs and the tournament is rotated between these clubs so that the event is accessible to more occasional entrants. Clubs are paid a small fee for hosting the event (~£50-£100 per day).
- The Tournament Director produces posters (A3) and entry forms (~10 per club) for all the clubs to display on their notice boards.
- The Tournament Director should be publicising event ideally 6-8 weeks prior to the event. An early bird discount sometimes works, but these players would normally enter without the incentive and there is no added benefit for getting the names in early as draws cannot be made until the closing date.
- Set a closing date 7-10 days before the event but allow late entries up until 4 days before the event – in Hampshire's case, the draw is carried out on the Tuesday lunchtime with the match times and order of play being completed Tuesday evening (~3 hours work).
- Emails are sent out with entry forms (in Word and pdf formats) to all players held in the tournament directory. Reminder emails are sent every week until the closing date. Draws and orders of play are also sent out 4 days prior to the event (Tuesday evening) and during the course of the weekend (including Saturday night with Sunday's order of play).
- Entry fee is set at £10 or £12.50 with a performance T-Shirt. The T-shirt is heavily subsidised to encourage more players to but and 'advertise' the event. The Hampshire tournament shirts are designed by the tournament director and this is agreed upon

with the supplier – this is important due to costs and the turnaround so that they are ready in time for the tournament.

- The tournament organiser needs to be a little flexible over accepting entry by email with payment on the day and late entrants. Players not from the county can be allowed in at the Tournament Director’s discretion if they will add something to the event.
- Collate a database (Excel spreadsheet) with all entrants’ names, mobiles, email address and playing standard of all players that links to previous events (draws, seedings, results, etc).
- The aim is to have 8 or 16 player MONRAD draws so that the matches fit better with each round being played at the same time. Players should get at least 3/4 matches over the weekend with progressively competitive matches (however, be mindful of the O45 where players can struggle with 3+ matches in a weekend).
- The use of tournament software (Excel has proved to be more than adequate with minor fine tuning over 10 seasons with several variations for draw templates) and printing of all tournaments with a playing schedule for each day helps ensure all players and quickly and easily see what is happening;
- Set up a central tournament desk with a laptop, draw sheets (A3) and order of play (A3).
- Matches are PAR scoring to 11 and winner marks the next match – players quickly get used to this and expect to mark once they have won a match. Qualified referees are used where possible for the later stages and earlier rounds can be used as a tool for referee assessment.
- The Tournament Director receives £200 for managing the event from County Association, based on meeting certain criteria – a successful event, publicity, etc;
- Sponsors are helpful but not essential for a successful event. The County does not provide any additional money for prize money/trophies so a large turnout / sponsors is needed to offer good prizes;
- Prize money is dependent on number of entrants, the level of squash being played and whether sponsors offer a suitable alternative. Wine is also often bought as a supplement to prizes. An example of a prize breakdown would be:

	A (8/12)	B (12/16)	C (12/16)	O45 (8)
No sponsor	100, 60, 30, 20	40, 20, 10	20, 10	40, 20, 10
Sponsor	70&R, 40&B, 30, 20	30&R, 20&B, 10	20&R, 10&B, 10	30&R, 10&B

- Try to enlist qualified referees for the final stages. The county can look to use junior referees for the earlier rounds so they can be assessed/certified, etc.
- All finals are held on Sunday afternoon with all the courts being used right up to the A-grade final which should then be the only match on court.
- County must underwrite the event to ensure no losses – a small loss is tolerated if the event is successful by attracting players and promoting squash.

Possibly future developments / ideas:

- Use SMS messaging and Twitter for more regular updates – difficult if the Tournament is also competing.
- Use BACS for entry payments.
- Use an online entry form.

Admin tasks:

- Find a host club.
- Order balls.
- Source shirts.
- Contact potential sponsors.
- Contact referees.
- Make sure trophies are located and engraved.
- Print entry forms and posters and then post to clubs.
- Email players.
- Place the entry forms and draws on the website.
- Find a suitable method to rank / grade / seed players – a combination of League rankings, Squash Levels, previous tournaments, player feedback and a lot of gut feeling.
- Source and decide upon prizes / money (generally last minute dependant on entries).
- Write up event for the press and website.