



Fit for the Future Awards of the Year

Nominee

Name of Nominee: Darlington South Park Bowls Club

County: Durham

Club name: Darlington South Park Bowls Club

We would love to hear the fantastic work that is taking place at all levels of our sport. This award recognises the incredible achievements at club and county level that leads to a growth of participation and exposure in our sport. Please share with us your nominee`s stories, achievements and initiatives of the season 2022.

In 2022 my club embarked on a project called 'Thats How We Roll' which has been designed for 2 key reasons:

1. To increase bowls for vulnerable people and those with disABILITY (Inclusion)
2. To create a youth setup and structure to support bowls development and from a young age (4 and up)

Please see www.thatshowweroll.uk for basics.

The club teamed up with local community groups and care homes to put the word out there and provide a sport that truly is for all. Although the project is ran by Darlington South Park we have stressed the importance of strengthening bowl for the community across all clubs and not just our own. We invited volunteers from 2 other bowls club (North Lodge BC and Hundens Ladies BC) to support and we used all 3 bowling venues to attract people from different areas of the town.

As well as heavily promoting via social media and websites we have gained local press and have been nominated for a Darlington Community Award for our efforts.

To prepare the project we ensured that all volunteers were DBS checked, sent 5 people out on Level 1 coaching courses and ensured safeguarding training was provided. We felt this large scale project had to be done safely for not on the users but protection for the volunteers.

Inclusion:

For the first time in the clubs history we became members of Disability Bowls England. We had already raised funds for wheelchairs, ramps, and bowling aids in 2020 and 2021 so the plan was to now develop the club and use these items to promote inclusion in bowls. A team of volunteers, 2 who have won coaching awards this year ran a fortnightly session on Fridays, this started as 4 or 5 people using wheelchairs and ramps from the edge of the green but has developed into 20+ people every fortnight with lots of different abilities. Theres people with physical disability, learning disability and many other challenges such as dementia. We have teamed up with Keylink, Wheelshare and Moorlands Care Home who are now regulars to these sessions and we are now running these sessions at Darlington Indoor Bowls Club to keep these people independent where we have agreed a financial deal to use their facility through the winter.

Different aids have been used, bowling arms, actually chairs with matting, wheelchairs, ramps, frames, anything required to help people play bowls. These players have then been matched against people of similar abilities to help them feel competitive and comfortable in their space. This really has been heart-warming to see and the smiles alone have made our volunteers proud. Games are adapted to suit distance, needs and we have ran 3 competitions to ensure that these bowlers could get involved with the rest of the membership on our club finals day and we now have champions that are welcomed to our presentation events.



We now look to continue this every year and keep expanding participation and will seek to understand how to get these bowlers involved on a wider stage should they wish to do so. We are in talks with South Park Foundation about better disabled access and facilities in our park bowls green.

Tell us more about your nominee.

Childrens Bowls:

We ran regular sessions on Saturdays for children bowlers using 3 greens across the town ran by our volunteers. The aim to have a permanent childrens setup which will develop into childrens teams and expand across different venues. The age range went from aged 4 all the way up to 18, we even had 3 of our children members gaining some work experience as volunteers running the sessions.

Sessions included around 8 obstacles per week for 2 hour sessions learning different skills around distance, line, length etc. 2 of our volunteers made 20+ activities using justbowl equipment and other gimmicks such as goals, cones, skittles etc. These fun sessions lasted 2 hours and usually had a fun competition to end with dishing out medals etc. Our volunteers were well selected and DBS checked, they included teachers, coaches, other sports coaches and people who work in Social Care.

We managed to gain sponsorship through Poundland in a kits4kids scheme so each and every child received a bowls shirt and we had a celebration day with BBQ, presentation and the Poundland Mascot meeting the children. These sessions were well attended with 15 to 25 childrens most week, it was so popular we had to stop advertising until we can gain further volunteers.

For some of our sessions we let the children use our disability aids so they can see how adaptive bowls can be, the children found it very engaging and we hope that they learned a lot from these sessions. We had workbook and scoring sheets for each obstacle to keep interest and fun, we even had a noughts and crosses board for bowls! We used around 10 volunteers and we had a number of children joining our bowls club and Hundens Bowls Club off the back of our project. Next year we look to encourage these children back with free membership and coaching support, if we get enough interest we may run some mini leagues, we have already ran competitions. These sessions will be going indoor for the winter also very soon!

This project is set to revolutionise bowls in the North East and all clubs will see the benefit, not just South Park. South Park in itself thrive without much effort now so this project is to ensure that the club is future proof!

All booking systems for this project are now electronic and easy to use and we look to develop further systems to ensure that when people join the club off the back of the project that we have plenty to offer at club level that meets the levels (may it be social or competitive) that they wish to do.

We are designing a pamphlet of all our offerings as we speak to further promote bowls to ALL!