

WEST BRIDGFORD MONARCHS HOCKEY CLUB

Dear Members,

Welcome to the new season, and what an exciting one it is promising to be, I can't remember the last time I was feeling so enthusiastic.

I know it only seems like yesterday that we relinquished the hold that hockey has on our weekends, but I for one am looking forward to the new season and the challenges ahead, not without a little bit of pride, because we have all done something rather special. A few weeks ago a couple of us went down to the pitch for its baptism, and what a pitch it is. The surface is now second to none, and it seems so much bigger. I am truly delighted. By the start of the season we will have new lightweight goals, and hopefully the side boards will be renovated to match the new boards at the top end. There has been a huge amount of work involved in getting the new pitch completed, working with the School to get the initial agreement to proceed, through to fund raising within the Club, the application for external grants, the coordination of contractor quotes, application for planning permission, and so on – you get the drift – I would like to formally thank on your behalf the key movers and shakers, our Secretary Martin Ebsworth, the School Manager Carol Sheffield and the Headmaster Rob McDonough, who have been beyond brilliant.

The new pitch will bring new challenges this season as the Club will look to strengthen itself on the playing side. Close season transfers have been underway at the Mens top end as a number of excellent players have expressed an interest in coming to us. I do detect a reversal of the traditional one-way flow to our arch rivals down by the University. Our task is to ensure that our policy of good hockey for all grass-roots players is not compromised, while we remain aware of the need to renew and strengthen. The Monarchs will also have a challenging season ahead with both 1st and 2nd teams stepping up a League, but I am sure that we will rise to that challenge – we always do.

I would like to thank all the people who have gone that extra mile to put something back into the Club last season. Despite our size, we are still an amateur organisation, and rely on people to give of their time and expertise simply for the love of the game and the Club. My heros have been Martin for everything, Derek for his great bar, Jimmy for handling the difficult money side of things, Andy and Liz for their brilliant Socials, and Rachael Fell, who as President has been outstanding, a true West Bridgfordian despite being a Yorkshire lass. My final mention must be for Bob, who has decided to step down as Mens selection guru this year. His experience and knowledge of all things "Bridgy" and his ACAS diplomacy is legend, and he will be missed, especially by me as I step into the breach.

Captains were concerned last season about the poor availability of a number of players early in the season. This meant that we had a slow start to the leagues, with a number of teams losing points to teams we would normally beat. I hope that we can improve this year, and start the season at full strength – start with a bang, not a whimper.

Coaching started on Monday 3rd August at 7.30pm for the Men and Thursday 6th August at 6pm for the Ladies at the School.

Junior training will start on Sunday 6th September at 9.30am, this season at the School pitch. All juniors are welcome as are any players who wish to help.

Please make sure that we have your early season availabilities and your Subscription cheque as soon as possible. It is nearly upon us.

So all in all a pretty good season 2008 – 2009. A new pitch, the result of a brilliant effort by all the Club, the granting of Clubs First status during the season, the gaining of funding to provide paid coaches for hockey development in the feeder Primary Schools and the winning of the Rushcliffe Sports Club of the Year Award. We must be doing something right.

Looking forward to a great season both on and off the pitch.

Geoff Bail

Club Chair