

## English Petanque Association Inter-Regional Championship

### Southern Counties Petanque Association Southern Junior Team

In terms of games won there was a big improvement from recent years. But they never really had an easy game during the weekend and this is shown in their point's difference. The Juniors played their part in helping with the overall score in the main Championships. As always the key is consistency, all the team had good spells and bad at times, so I will not mention any individuals.

For me as Manager I did not have to do much in terms of having to help them with play and strategy, only be there for them. Having seen reports from the World Championships some things have come to my attention which will be of help to me and any other teams I look after in the future. The lads had enough water during the weekend as it was hot, but I did not really look at what they were eating during the day's play and perhaps a different diet may have been more appropriate.

Yet again I am very pleased to be manager of the Southern Counties Juniors Team at Brean Sands. My first actually as Southern Counties Juniors Manager after looking after our juniors who have represented other regions over the last few years. I thank the lads who sent emails of support.

The Junior Team was made up of lads from Southampton City Petanque Club, Graham Galton, Shane King, Robert Padwick and Wayne Webster. It was pleasing to see that all of Southampton Juniors playing at Brean this year.

The Team had in their league the same Regions as the rest of the main Squad. The other teams that I thought would be our main opposition were Kent, Northern, and West Midlands, However I did stress to the lads that no teams was to be taken lightly and I was looking for the Junior Team to go and win their Championship and thus helping the overall score in the Main Competition.

The lads got to a good start in terms of results winning 13-10, 13-10, 13-9, including an important win over Northern. However they were making hard work of the games that they had played. Their first lose came in the last game before the break against Chiltern. The Team went down 5-13 and the lads could not get it together and did not seem interested. In the afternoon the lads played three games winning two, Isle of Wight 13-6 and London 13-11 but lost to the very strong team from Kent 8-13. The Kent team are very consistent and this was the difference between the sides, and the lads fell away in the second half of the game.

At this stage the lads were still in the Competition, but had lost two games. I had said that they could not lose more than this if they were going to win. I had been rotating the lads each game and do not feel that this made any difference to the games that the Lads had lost.

On the Sunday, saw the team with the worse possible draw having to play Kent and the Northern first thing in the morning. Wins against teams would bring Southern Counties back in with a real chance again of the title, but it was not to be and the lads went down to Kent 8-13 and to Northern 9-13. Again they could not get into these games and take the game to the other teams. With four loses now the championship was beyond them. With this the pressure lifted from the team and myself and went on the remaining three games left in the Competition, Isle of Wight 13-7, London 13-7 and West Midlands 13-12. The last game was very hard, but in some ways the team played there best petanque, There was some friction between the sides, nothing serious as Graham Galton and the lads were playing against Claire Brooks a Great Britain player, so were keen to get one over the other. This was vital for West Midlands to win as they still had a chance of winning the Championship.

In the end the lads ended with a record of,  
**8 wins, 134 points for, 124 points against, 10 points +.**

As already stated I did feel that the lads could have won this year, there was a window of opportunity. Looking at the final results it was a close competition this year with the top five teams will all feel that they had a chance. Although the team ended only one place higher than last year, in they could have played a bit better if they had more to eat. The lads did say that I could have been more vocal at times in giving them support and I take that on board. It's important that we all learn and improve whether we are playing or managing/coaching.

On a more personal note, it was not easy looking after four seventeen years old and being a manager this year. For all the juniors there are temptations at Brean. I was not happy with them after Friday and Saturday night, but as far as I know they did not cause any problem with any one else. In the light of day and after the event I realise that we have all been their age once and have been there as well. Brean is a fun weekend but they must understand that we all have a job to do and are a team as a whole.

I would after what I have said, still be happy to do it all again next year if asked by Southern Counties Petanque Association. The juniors next year can do well next year, but it will take a lot of work; Kent will be the team to beat again.

Peter Galton  
Southern Counties Petanque Association Junior Team Manager.