

WEST AREA PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT LEAD REPORT TO AGM 2024/25

Umpire Panels

Let's start on a positive note!

It is pleasing to be able to report that we will be nominating George Marshall and Tom Stoner to NPUA for next season. Obviously we wish them well with their new challenge and hope that we will still see them taking West appointments on Saturdays.

There were also a couple of promotions from Men's B Panel to Men's A Panel and we welcomed no less than 11 new Level 2 umpires during the season.

The number of new Level 2's could be seen to indicate that numbers on the Panels had improved considerably. However, that is not the case! Several of these umpires had already started taking appointments during the previous season and, unfortunately, 2 have already left the area. Consequently numbers are pretty much the same at the end of the season as they were at the start of the season and it appears that there is very little prospect of more than an odd Level 2 candidate for next season.

Umpire Awards

Last season we introduced a number of awards for West Panel umpires and as these were not included in my report last year I would like to confirm that they were:

Performance Umpire of the Year – Charlie Pritchard

Most Improved Umpire of the Year – Tom Stoner

Men's Panel Umpire of the Year – Rob Ware

Women's Panel Umpire of the Year – Nick Stibbs

The Performance and Most Improved awards are Selection Panel decisions and I hope are obvious what they are rewarding.

The Men's and Women's awards are primarily agreed by myself and Graham Woolcock and are recognition of umpires that have gone the extra mile to help, often quite literally! It has been agreed that these awards are to be known as the Pete Hammond awards in honour of our recently departed colleague;

So this year's winners are:

Performance Umpire of the Year – Richard Shellard

Most Improved Umpire of the Year – George Marshall

Pete Hammond Men's Panel Umpire of the Year – Dick Turpin

Pete Hammond Women's Panel Umpire of the Year – Tom Wilson

Assessments/Coaching

I have not calculated the number of assessment or coaching appointments made to Area appointed League matches during the season but most umpires had at least 1 assessment, and the majority of those that escaped the scrutiny of an assessor had the benefit of at least 1 coaching. Those that escaped prying eyes completely can rest assured they will not be so fortunate come next season!

The assessment and coaching team has been strengthened with the addition of Ray Robbetts who undertook a number of coaching appointments and Karen Fynn who has qualified as an assessor.

Pleasingly we were able to hold an assessors day in February at a Men's Premiership match at Taunton Vale which was a very useful exercise as we strive for consistency in assessments. It would be amiss not to record thanks to the Taunton Vale club for hosting us and arranging for parking and after match refreshments at no cost.

Below Area level, both North and South Sectors undertook some assessment and coaching but the number of umpires taking appointments below Area level remains very small.

Development Events

After a fairly quiet couple of years for a variety of reasons, it is pleasing to be able to report that we were able to run several events during the last year.

In May the West hosted the Women's O65 Area Masters Tournament and this was umpired predominantly by Club Level 1 umpires, with a small number of NPUA umpires and a number of West Coaches on hand to aid their development. The response to the email that went out offering the opportunity to take part in this Tournament was excellent with about 30 umpires wanting to come to the Tournament and a similar number saying that they would have liked to come but were already committed to other things. Unfortunately this meant that a number had to be disappointed, something that I was not expecting!

September saw us provide umpires for the Westberries pre season tournament where a number of prospective Level 2 umpires had the opportunity to umpire with NPUA umpires and receive coaching.

Also in September we held the first umpire pre season get together since Covid, at Taunton School.

Looking forward, the West are hosting the Men's O65 Area Masters Tournament in June and I am currently assembling the umpire team. We have also been invited back to the Westberries Tournament in September and it is intended to again hold a pre season get together in September.

Indoors

An interesting season not without its challenges!

All tournaments other than 1, due to a pitch booking issue, were held at the excellent new facility at Clifton College. Availability was pretty poor, particularly for the midweek schools tournaments, but we just about managed primarily due to the small number of teams competing meaning that smaller teams of umpires were required.

We still urgently need a few more indoor umpires with our dedicated but too small Panel getting ever older! We are actively looking for opportunities for umpires new to indoors to have a go on something a little less competitive than the West Finals and if anyone would like to get involved they should let me know please.

And so to finish, a big thank you to everyone who has taken appointments this season, assessors, coaches and umpires. Many of you have been available most weeks, and I hope that will be the same next season. I also hope that those who were only available occasionally will be more regularly available next season.

Thanks also to Charles Hallows for his efforts Chairing the Officiating Committee and, absolutely finally, a special thank you to Graham Woolcock for his efforts with the appointments.

David Lillywhite
West Umpires Performance Development Lead