



UNIVERSITY TENNIS CLUB SUCCESS STORY

‘A LESSON IN REBUILDING and community’

Brunel University Tennis Club



BACKGROUND

Brunel University Tennis Club has undergone a major transformation in a short space of time. From, by its own admission, being a club without a cohesive and effective structure for running a university sports club, it won Brunel University’s most improved sports club and club of the year awards for the 2023/24 academic year.

In a university with a student population smaller than many of the leading sporting universities across Britain (c. 19,000), the club has grown its membership to more than 100, developed its offering for a range of abilities, and worked to unify the club and develop a sense of community, regardless of people’s level of tennis.

INITIATIVES

- Added a regular beginner programme through a university initiative called Brunel Active running multiple times a week and run by players of our university teams, to teach beginners the fundamentals of tennis and allow them to play fun social games in a friendlier environment.
- Created in-house competitions and events to raise funds and engage current members and the wider community, plus fundraising more within the university to create revenue for more coaching, equipment, sessions etc.
- Created a retention system called Club Points where players can earn points through winning social games to win rewards, along with an updated leaderboard and table. This serves to unify all levels of tennis within the club in an overall fun system that enhances engagement and a sense of a wider community, regardless of the level of tennis
- Created a third-party contract with a local club, Wayfarers LTC, to allow students to play more in their free time and to work at a discounted club membership.
- Created links with the LTA and created a student volunteer force to help supply student activators for the Barclays Free Park Tennis initiative.

KEY TIPS FOR RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY TENNIS CLUB



SUCCESSSES

- ✓ Ensure high committee turnout to freshers fair events and that all members are engaged and can readily give information out if needed
- ✓ Committee engagement with available university and union channels is essential to stand out. Being advertised by your union to the wider university student body will increase exposure to a myriad of new participants for your club.
- ✓ Events are the best way to both advertise to and engage students. Small ideas such as beginners trying to return a team player's serve, a doubles competition, or a red vs blue league will engage the community and help the club to stand out. The main principle behind this, however, is consistency. Being consistent with fun events will ensure constant participation and growth among membership.
- ✓ Student Committees are very important in setting the tone and ethics of a club. Attitude and behaviour on and off the court can trickle down into the wider community and reflect into the wider community, whether that be in the teams or even at the beginner level.
- ✓ In the long run creating tools for future committees are a good way to ensure the longevity of future committees, as well as make things easier for them. A database of templates and/or examples of registers, coaching invoices, contacts with staff, etc will prove to be very helpful and allow for a platform of collaboration between committee members.

- Despite an overall drop in sports memberships at the university, Brunel Tennis Club was able to grow its membership size through active advertising and word of mouth of its beginner programme.
- Very successful beginner programme with members often touting it as the best coaching and social programme run by a sports club in the university. This has added a variety of players and opportunities for the club in terms of more potential committee members, more engaged members for events such as fundraising, and overall, creating a wider sense of community.
- Won Club of the Year and Most Improved Club of the Year at the Brunel University Sports Ball event, an achievement not seen in the university in over a decade, and something which will increase the club's funding going forward.
- Increased the proactiveness and engagement of the club's Instagram page, increasing the exposure of the tennis club as well as getting the club's personality across better: **search @bruneltennisclub**



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