

● Sport – Softball, Basketball and Cycling



LISKEARD Cricket Club's ladies' softball team. Pictured, back row, left to right: Lisa Adey, Nakita Kinsman, Pip Haley, Emily Mays, Emma Bryant, Lynn Webb and Anne Gibson; front, Emma-Jayne Mullis and Kate Bewshea Wilson

New ladies' softball team is flourishing

LISKEARD Cricket Club's ladies' softball section played their first softball match of the season against Boconnoc recently.

This was their first match in the newly formed East Division of Cornwall Women's Softball Cricket League.

Spokesperson Lynn Webb said the team played well together and learned a great deal from playing their very first competitive match.

They are looking forward to the remainder of the season which will see them take on neighbours St Neot and a return match with Boconnoc.

Liskeard Ladies started training last summer, with most players completely new to the game of cricket.

Lynn commented: "I wasn't playing netball anymore but still wanted to play a team sport – one a little less physically demanding."

"I spoke to a few friends in the Liskeard area and eight or nine of us fancied playing cricket, so I spoke to Andy Harwood back in December 2021 and it's gone from there."

Lynn went along to the cricket club AGM shortly afterwards and training commenced in the following May of 2022, with guidance and coaching from Tim Hyslop and help with training from the men's team.

Since then, interest has continued to steadily grow for the ladies' team, with 15 people, ranging in age from 14 to 68, attending weekly softball training.

Sessions are now run by team captain Emma-Jayne Mullis who, along with Lisa Adey, achieved their Level One Coaching Qualification this year.

The team have their first sponsor, B & B J Phillips Builders Ltd, who has purchased equipment and team shirts.

Liskeard Cricket Club has also developed opportunities for players of different ages and levels.

Their Dynamos group, for five-to-eight-year-olds, is now in its second year. Dynamos will continue into the summer – sessions are run on a Thursday evening 6-7 pm, followed by the weekly sessions for disability cricket, 7-8 pm, which began this May.

It is hoped that links can be made with Liskeard School so that

younger girls have a clear route into softball and then hardball cricket within the Liskeard area.

Lynn is excited about future possibilities, saying: "The club is developing at all levels and there are plans for it to go from strength-to-strength next year."

"We are a really united, inclusive bunch and have a supportive approach to make everyone feel welcome and encouraged, no matter what their age, ability, or experience."

She said: "Ladies softball cricket is gaining popularity year on year."

"We've already played friendlies with the Menheniot/Looe team, and Callington have started up this year and we hope to organise a friendly with them later in the season."

"Other clubs are also getting started so hopefully we can get up to eight teams in the East Cornwall softball league for next season."

If you fancy getting involved, please turn up at the cricket ground on Mondays, 6pm for training or email ladies@liskeardcricketclub.co.uk for more information.

CYCLING

EIGHT riders from the South West's Saint Piran Cycling teams have been selected to ride for Team GB at the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships, the highest level of the sport.

This is a first for the team and region. Will Tidball (Devon), Sharn Hooper (Somerset) and seven of their team-mates will take part in Glasgow from August 3-13.

Saint Piran has one of the largest contingents of riders in the GB team with more numbers than many World Tour teams.

Riders will represent GB in a range of track, road, mountain bike and para disciplines.

Team owner Richard Pascoe said: "Saint Piran is delighted that six riders from our squad are representing GB at the World Championships – one of the highest levels a rider can ride out during his career. We are delighted to be part of that process and journey. It's an immense source of pride, and testament to the hard work of all our staff in the team and the South West development."

"Coaching teams from across the region will be attending with our riders."

BASKETBALL

City Patriots sign up Dusha and Johnson

PLYMOUTH City Patriots have added last season's National Basketball League joint Most Valuable Player and finals MVP from last season, Taylor Johnson.

The 28-year-old Johnson, originally from Aledo, Texas, has been entertaining fans in the NBL since 2018, when he signed for the Leicester Warriors in D1.

He played his college basketball in the States at NCAA D1 level, representing Dartmouth for four years. He averaged just under 12 points per game in his senior year, before heading to the Midlands.

Johnson has since spent his time in the NBL, leaving the Leicester Warriors for Thames Valley, before spending the last two seasons with Hemel Storm.

He was a massive part of the Storm's undefeated 2022/23 season, where they managed to go the entire season without a loss, finishing as play-off champions and also bagging the finals MVP.

He has the impressive stat of never averaging less than 22 points per game as well as distributing the ball very well, never dropping below six assists per game.

Patriots coach Paul James said: "He's been so impressive in the NBL and he's certainly going to strengthen our squad moving forward."

"Taylor has a great all-round game. His scoring and passing are impressive and I look forward to working with him and seeing just what he is capable of."

James has encountered his newest signing before, scouting him previously for a pre-season game when Johnson played for the Thames Valley Cavaliers, and the Texan impressed coach James even then.

Johnson commented: "I've played at the Plymouth Pavilions once before, albeit not in Plymouth colours. The atmosphere was awesome and the appreciation for basketball was clear. I'm excited to be returning, this time in a Patriots jersey."

Johnson's dominance in the NBL for the last five seasons makes him one to watch for the coming season. His clear ability to score and facilitate made him practically unstoppable, on a Hemel squad that would certainly have caused some problems in the British Basketball League.

Meanwhile, Albanian international and BBL fan favourite, Elvis Dusha, is set to return to Plymouth and captain the Patriots in their third season as a BBL franchise.

Last season, Dusha impressed with some of his best performances in the BBL, being named Player of the Month for November and finishing top 10 in the point guard efficiency ratings as well as finishing third in assists per game for the season with 6.1.

He also impressed off the court, with his charisma but more specifically, with his dedication and hard work with clubs and schools, giving young children something to aspire to.

Dusha, approaching 30, is heading into his 11th season in the BBL and as such has become known as the youngest veteran in the league.

He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge, combined with his unselfish style of play, making him a welcome addition to any BBL club.

In his 10 years in the league, he has gained the reputation of a dedicated, hard-working professional that has excellent point guard abilities on both offence and defence, and can lead his team by example.

Dusha has been consistent throughout, and has managed to improve his game with every passing season.

James saw the signing as a no-brainer. "He's our captain and has led us from the Patriots' very beginning."

"He has always been a fantastic facilitator, and last season showed he can also be a scorer when we need him to. We're very happy to have him back."