

Monkstone Petanque Club: Review of 2024

WPA League

Our club fielded four teams in 2024 across the three divisions of the WPA League. In Division 1, the Monarchs lost only two games all season and secured a pleasing second place. The Minotaurs had a mixed season and relegation to Division 2 loomed, but they fought a rearguard action to keep their place in the top flight. The Marauders fought valiantly in the playoffs and secured promotion to Division 1. And so, for the first time ever, the 2025 season will see three of our teams in the first division. Our newest team, the Meteors, achieved promotion to Division 2 in their first season, an impressive feat for players who had never played at league level before.

Other Competitions

The Petanque Home Nations was held in Jersey and our club was proud to have 11 players in the Wales squad, providing three of the eight Welsh teams. In the Celtic Challenge, hosted by Caerleon, two of our members represented Wales.

Our annual two-leg competition with Royal Wootton Bassett saw a Monkstone victory. We also forged links with Wilton Bridge Petanque from Ross-on-Wye in another home-and-away fixture and won both legs.

Our club hosted a number of big WPA events in 2024 as we have 16 pistes to offer and, as members of other clubs tell us, they enjoy playing at our venue. We also held our own open competitions, which were very well attended, particularly our Open Doubles, which attracted 68 boulers within the region.

Our internal Super League, which allows our members to continue playing competitively over the autumn and winter months under lights, has become a permanent fixture with six teams participating in 2023/24.

Community Participation

In March our club hosted an event to celebrate International Women's Day, organised by our Gill Greenwell. It proved to be a fantastic day, with a great atmosphere amongst the 44 ladies participating in a friendly but competitive event, followed by a marvellous buffet.

Junior Section

Perhaps the most successful aspect of 2024 was the creation of a junior section for children between 7 and 17. Like a lot of clubs, we have an ageing membership and that reality cannot be ignored. In April, Ash Seath took the impetus to set up a junior section from scratch and, ably supported by club volunteers, we run a junior practice session on Sunday mornings. Some of the volunteers are also working towards a coaching qualification, specifically for children.

Over the year about 20 children came to learn the skills of petanque and our club now has a core of 12 juniors who have joined our club. There has also been a spin-off from establishing the junior section. The children are brought by their parents and a number of them have now joined our club as adults and, because they are in a much lower age range, they have brought down our average age range!

The enthusiasm of our juniors is contagious and they are confident enough to display their worth. One of our juniors actually won a WPA novice doubles competition against thirteen adult teams!

We must thank Sports Wales and Magic Little Grants for supporting the venture.

The Future

So we look back on a successful year at many levels, but we must not forget that most of our members do not play in league, national or international events. They are social members who just want a chuck, a chat, a cuppa and a bit of banter. The future looks good if we can continue to entice such numbers to leave their homes and get a bit of gentle exercise together.

Roger Griffin