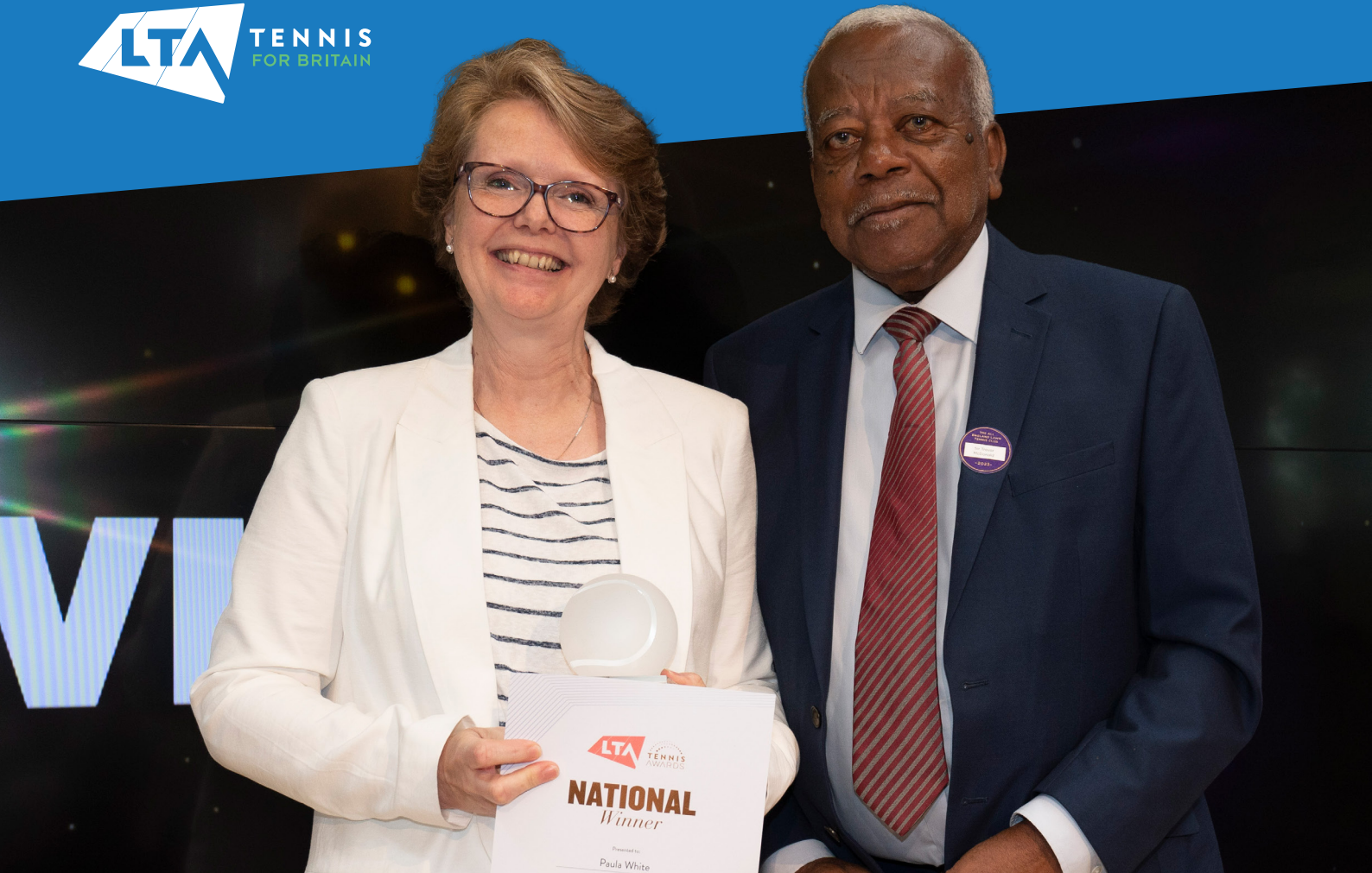


LTA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 2023: PAULA WHITE



LTA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: PAULA WHITE

Volunteer Paula rescued Ifield Tennis Club from the verge of collapse, with support from the LTA, her family and volunteers. She has secured a sustainable and inclusive future for the club and the local community in Crawley, Sussex.



BACKGROUND

Ifield TC was established in the 1960s and was a thriving community club for many years. By 2020, however, the facilities were in disrepair and the membership was dismal – just eight adults and three juniors. By 2021 the LTA urged the two-court club to take action, with their support.

Volunteer Paula White, a club member for 10 years and club treasurer for six, and now Club Secretary took on the mammoth task of planning and leading the club rebuild. With the support of an LTA Participation Development Manager Jemima Lee she produced an action plan for recovery. Alongside a dedicated committee and her husband and son, she worked relentlessly from policy making to rebranding, despite limited experience in many areas.

Read on to see what Paula has achieved at Ifield and why she was nominated for LTA Volunteer of the Year 2023.



AN EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUAL

Ifield TC is a small club, but Paula used every resource possible to make positive changes. Many initiatives involved honing new skills such as IT/technology, but she successfully approached tasks with a can-do attitude. Within 22 months, achievements included:

- Court resurfacing for the first time in 40 years, and fencing repairs
- Clubhouse redecoration to create an inspiring space
- Time-consuming grant applications
- New website, club signage and logo designed by Paula's son, Ben
- Engaging social media presence
- Inclusion policy and commitment to being welcoming, adaptable and affordable
- More realistic fees, leading to membership growth of over 600%: currently 57 players, plus summer-only memberships
- Club lease extension

INCLUSIVE, INNOVATIVE AND INSPIRATIONAL

With her boundless enthusiasm, Paula has ensured that tennis is available and welcoming to Crawley residents of all ages, faiths and ethnicities.

Promoted via the new website, the junior section has grown and Paula is on site to greet juniors and their families each week. These junior sessions are £25 per year or £1 per session to minimise impact on average household incomes and help break down barriers to play. She introduced 'Rusty Rackets' sessions and attends these to encourage new players or those returning to the game. She continues to work with the LTA to drive the club forward with the ethos of have fun, get active and make friends.

'Our aim is to make Ifield Tennis Club a welcoming, inclusive space that will appeal to tennis enthusiasts of all ages and abilities and allow players to improve and thrive without pressure. We will be inclusive to all in the community by being welcoming, adaptable and affordable.'
Ifield Tennis Club

ARE YOU INSPIRED BY PAULA?

If you or your family are passionate about introducing or improving tennis in your community, you could make a difference too. No experience or expertise is required – just enthusiasm and determination. Contact your county association or the LTA customer service team for tips and support.

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR ALL

Paula wholly supports the committee and attends club sessions to ensure continued club growth.

Future plans include website development to automate processes, an open day with free tennis and entering the Weald League. For a club that was practically defunct, this is an incredible turnaround.

“

Volunteering with my family has brought us all a sense of wellbeing and accomplishment, and new friendships. The committee chair and volunteer teams have worked tirelessly to help rebuild the club and strengthen the community through tennis, with LTA support at county, region and national level. Ifield is a small club, but a diverse and thriving one! I am proud and honoured to be recognised as a valued volunteer.”

Paula White

FOLLOW US FOR MORE

LTA, The National Tennis Centre
100 Priory Lane, Roehampton
London SW15 5JQ

T: 020 8487 7000
E: info@lta.org.uk
www.lta.org.uk

 @the_LTA

 LTA

 @LTA

 LTA – Tennis for Britain