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Dear Parents/Guardians

Some people might think that the Football World Cup has gripped the school, however this pales in comparison when you take a look at E block during break and lunch times and see the number of boys making use of our outdoor table tennis facilities.

Over the last few weeks our Sports Leaders, led by Sam Higson, have run a tournament in preparation for the School Games County Finals, and what preparation it was! Sam and his team whittled the hundred or so boys down to a team of four who went to the finals.

The standard was unbelievable, I literally couldn't believe it. Table Tennis is not usually a sport that has me on the edge of my seat, but how the boys played, their skill level and attitude; it made me want to call up Matthew Syed and tell him to come and see what we have going on in the school and maybe give us a mention in his next motivational book or Times write up. It was brilliant.

The boys did incredibly well, losing narrowly in a 3rd/4th play off by doubles tie break. However the result was irrelevant, it was more the process of them getting there. The hours on the tables during breaks and lunchtimes, playing, not being taught, no formal instruction, but playing. Through the boys own desire for enjoyment, through fun competition, they had turned themselves into the 4th best state school in the county.

It showed what can be achieved when opportunity is provided and the power of play, and if those results can be achieved with table tennis, it makes me very excited for the next few years of basketball with our court on the yard where the boys play non-stop. Constantly working on made up team plays and individual skill set – the yard at breaks and lunch has become a real hotbed for developing raw talent.

Pitch Up and Play

You will by now have received my (rather long) general information sheet where I mentioned our Pitch Up & Play initiative, which is similar to what is happening with basketball and table tennis, and an opportunity for boys to come out and play rugby and then football in an informal setting. With limited staff but plenty of keen boys, these informal sessions aim to develop our core group of players throughout the sports to ensure sustainability and individual development as boys move through the school while having some fun along the way.

Athletics

One of our best years. Huge numbers of boys made it to County Finals following our success in all age groups at Area Sports. This then led to a good group making their way to Regionals where Rob Jones and Theo Cochrane qualified for the National Finals in Birmingham beginning on Friday 13 July. Both did extremely well, with Theo achieving a personal best in the high jump of 1.75m.

Rob and Theo also featured in the Inter boys team who qualified for the National Team Finals, defeating Millfield in the process. The boys finished a credible 11th in the country, despite injury to key personnel. With a third of the team a year young and a junior team who set multiple personal bests at their regional round, athletics looks strong for the next few years and hopefully we'll be back at Nationals sooner rather than later.

The strength in depth was clear to see last Wednesday as our Year 7 team scored over 1000 points (rarely done) in the Super 8 competition at the County Final to win the event.

Cricket

Our cricketers experienced a tough season despite some excellent performances. The Y10 team made it to the County Semi Final in their ESCA T20 competition, while Year 9 came unstuck in the County Quarter Final of the ESCA Lord's Taverners Trophy, both against decent Dauntsey's sides who had some outstanding players.

Football

Our Y9 footballers finally completed their football season by winning the U14 County Cup and showing us we can run teams through the year in multiple sports and experience greater, as opposed to, diluted success. The Year 9 crop is a talented one and I look forward to seeing what they can do in the National Competitions as they move through the school.

Tennis

For the first time we have two teams through to Regional Finals in the autumn, both the Year 8 and Year 10 team qualified against tricky opposition. This places them as two of the top teams in the country and one round from National Finals.

The Senior Team finished their season Top 32 Nationally losing to Bournemouth Collegiate School in the penultimate round before Nationals.

Back in the lower school the Road to Wimbledon competition had its biggest ever first round draw of 138, in which Guy Mitchell was victorious over Hamish Goulding in the final. Both have now competed in the County Final which took place on 14 July. Hamish also represented the school as an individual at The School Games and finished 3rd overall a year young.

The 'non-club' team at the School Games won their competition with some excellent tennis from both the singles players and also the doubles team, crowning them County Champions.

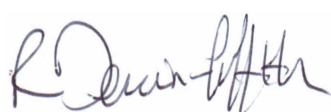
All in all an excellent round of summer sports, two individual National Finalists, one Team National Final, three Regional Finals and a host of County Champs with a plethora of Personal Best performances across the board and a number of boys representing the school for the first time.

This penultimate day of the term sees Sports Day once more and with the standard of athletics this year it's sure to be a highly competitive day of sport and a fine way to round off the year.

Thank you to all our staff, parents and boys who have supported us this term and year, it's been great fun and so long as we have parental support and willing boys we will always be able to match the biggest and best schools around. Our boys' attitudes are excellent and with that we can achieve anything.

I hope you all have a great summer; I have spoken to the boys already regarding September. The holidays is a time to recharge and relax, but also to put in some hard yards behind the scenes, everyone has a training programme to be getting on with and I can't wait for what the Autumn holds as we go again.

Best wishes



Mr Richard Demain-Griffiths
Director of Sport