

## **Greater Manchester Walking Football League History 2016-2017**

Walking football was first devised in the 1930s by Steve Bloomer of Derby County. It re-emerged in England in 2011 and Scotland in 2012. The sport was designated originally for the over 50s as a form of exercise and to get people back into physical activity and an aid to better mental health by way of the social benefits of meeting and conversing with others.

Competitions were the natural progression and these grew steadily over the formative years. The biggest problem was the age categorisation with many players in their early 50s competing with players 10 to 15 years older. This of course wasn't a level playing field.

Generally the younger players are fitter, more energetic, have better balance, are less likely to have replacement hips and knees, don't suffer as many injuries and recover quicker when they are injured.

Seeing the demand for age categorisation in walking football, I decided to enquire if any teams in the Manchester area were interested in playing in an over 60's league format. The response was encouraging and the first to embrace the idea was Paul Gardner of Rochdale Link4Life.

I had met Paul on the field of play a few times in one day tournaments and knew he was also an organiser of competitions in the Rochdale area. We met up to thrash out the details of how we would start a mini league and approached the Manchester County FA for help in becoming affiliated and sanctioned to them. Unfortunately they never responded.

We then approached the Lancashire County FA and Andrew Whitaker, their Football Development Officer – Disability and Inclusion, was a tremendous help in getting us affiliated and sanctioned and authorised to run an FA Full Time website. Thanks Andrew.



**Andrew Whitaker**

So we now had all the basics in place, plus the use of a brilliant venue at the Heywood Sports Village with it's brand new 3G pitches and excellent facilities. The venue was run by Link4Life where Paul was the Programme Manager - Health & Wellbeing.



**Paul Gardner**

Greater Manchester has the most walking football clubs in any area of the UK and the sport is the fastest growing activity for the older generation, so setting up a league in the area was a natural progression.

We launched the Greater Manchester Walking Football League in November 2016 to provide regular competitive football for the many over 60's walking footballers. The next step was to attract teams to the league, which we initially thought would possibly be around 4-6 in the local area. We proposed to start the league in February 2017.

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### **Over 60s Spring League 2017**

We were delighted and surprise when we had 8 over 60s teams enrolled for the first league season session on Wednesday 1st February. This increased to 10 teams in March. The GMWFL were the first FA affiliated over 60s walking football league in the UK.

The original eight were, AFC Blackpool Senior Seaside, Chadderton FC WF, Fleetwood Town Flyers, Maccabi Old Codgers, Nash Amblers, Rochdale Striders, Rochdale AFC Strollers and my own team Vintage Celtic. So not only had we attracted 6 local teams, we had teams travelling from Blackpool and Fleetwood. All teams were permitted a squad of 10, 6 players and 4 substitutes.

We started with 2 divisions of 4 teams in the February session and this increased to 10 teams in 2 divisions of 5 teams when AFC Blackpool Very Senior Seaside and Bolton Wanderers Walkers joined us for the March session.



### The 8 Teams Line Up For The Inaugural Session 1st February 2017

Having just played in the second session, can I congratulate the organisers on a superbly run session. The three referees used were the best I have ever played under, firm, fair and consistent.

I am in no doubt that the over 60 format is responsible for a more laid back, less testosterone fuelled but equally as committed game.

And, if there is a better surface than Heywood Sports Village on which to play, I have yet to see it.

And a free brew after !

With teams playing varying numbers of games in this inaugural season we decided that the only fair method of deciding league positions was a points per game average. My own team Vintage Celtic, part of the National League club, Stalybridge Celtic FC were declared winners with Nash Amblers runners up.

Combined Division Standings	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	GD	Points	Average Points Per Games
Vintage Celtic	15	6	9	0	7	27	1.8
Nash Amblers	14	7	3	4	6	24	1.7
Rochdale AFC Strollers	15	6	5	4	5	23	1.5
Chadderton FC WF	15	4	8	3	1	20	1.3
Rochdale Striders	15	3	8	4	-1	17	1.1
Bolton Wanderers	11	3	7	1	0	16	1.4
Fleetwood Town Flyers	14	2	8	4	-2	14	1.0
AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders	15	1	9	5	-4	12	0.8
Maccabi Old Codgers	14	2	4	8	-11	10	0.7
AFC Blackpool Very Senior Seasiders	8	2	3	3	-1	9	1.1

### Spring Season 2017 Standings



### **Vintage Celtic Winners Over 60s Spring League 2017**

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 With Paul and myself the only organisers and administrators of the league, we needed assistance and Paul's Link4Life colleague Barry Woodburn became responsible for team registration on tournament and league fixture dates. We felt it was essential that photographic proof of age was necessary to ensure that nobody under the age of 60 tried to participate in league sessions. One team did try to play ringers but obviously failed and left the facility.

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### **Over 65s Cup Tournament June 2017**

In June 2017 we held our first over 65s cup tournament. We had 10 teams in total, six of our league teams, AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders, AFC Blackpool Very Senior Seasiders, Chadderton FC WF, Rochdale Striders, Rochdale AFC Strollers and Vintage Celtic. The 4 other teams were Manchester Community WF, Tameside Striders, Wakefield Wanderers and Widnes.

The teams were split into 2 divisions of 5 teams playing round robin fixtures. The top 2 teams in each division would contest the knockout stages. Vintage Celtic won Division A with AFC Blackpool Very Senior Seasiders runners up. Widnes were Division B winners with Rochdale AFC Strollers runners up.

In the first semi-final Rochdale AFC Strollers beat Vintage Celtic and in the second semi-final Widnes beat AFC Blackpool Very Senior Seasiders. The final was a 0-0 stalemate at full time and went to penalties, Rochdale AFC Strollers winning the shoot out.



## **Rochdale AFC Strollers Winners Over 65s Cup Tournament June 2017**

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### **Martin Dawson Trophy 2017**

Twelve teams from far and wide set out to contest the Martin Dawson Trophy in September 2017. As well as our 6 league teams we had teams from the West Midlands, Sheffield, Wakefield, and Huddersfield travelling to participate. Two divisions of 6 teams would contest the trophy.

Division A consisted of Hartshill Strollers, Rochdale AFC Strollers, Tameside Striders, Vintage Celtic, Wakefield Wanderers Blue and Wakefield Wanderers Orange. Division B consisted of AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders, Blackburn Rovers WF, Fleetwood Town Flyers, Huddersfield Town WF, Rochdale Striders and Sheffield Vulcans.

Wakefield Wanderers Orange topped Division A, runners up were Rochdale AFC Strollers. Blackburn Rovers WF won Division B on goal difference with Sheffield Vulcans runners up. So these 4 teams would contest the knockout stages, or so we planned. Unfortunately the weather took a turn for the worst and we suffered torrential downpours which made further participation impossible.

The semi-finals, beaten by the downpours, would have seen Blackburn Rovers WF versus Rochdale AFC Strollers and Wakefield Wanderers Orange versus Sheffield Vulcans. It's pure speculation as to who would have contested the final as all four teams were impressive on the day.

As it turned out we felt the only option open to us was to choose the winners with the most points in the round robin divisional games. The winners were Wakefield Wanderers Orange, who retained their trophy after winning in 2016 before the GMWFL took over the Martin Dawson Trophy. Runners up were Blackburn Rovers WF.



### **Wakefield Wanderers Orange Winners Martin Dawson Trophy 2017**

Many thanks from all at Wakefield for the invite to play and for the chance to retain the trophy. Wish we had the chance to have battled it out with Blackburn or Vulcans but crikey it was wet and we were relieved to be coming in after standing in the Lancashire rain!

Great organisation from Bill and Paul, you certainly are leading in the tournament organisation stakes! The referees were some of the best we have encountered – many thanks to all the opponents for the spirit in which the games were played.

Niall O'Donnell, Chairman Wakefield Walking Football

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### **Over 60s Autumn League 2017**

The over 60s Autumn league saw five new teams entering the league and one dropping out. AFC Blackpool Very Senior Seasiders were the ones to drop out of the league and the five new teams joining us were Bolton Wanderers Walkers B, Bury Relics, Nash Bees, Roach Dynamos and Wakefield Wanderers.

With the original idea of a local league for Greater Manchester teams, it was obvious that with teams from the Fylde Coast and Bolton joining us for the inaugural Spring League, we had to accept that we were attracting teams from further afield.

From testimonials received, the standard of refereeing and organisation were the main attraction, together with the excellent venue and location near the motorway network.

So now the over 60s league would see 5 teams in Divisions 1 and 2 and 4 teams in Division 3. The top 5 teams in the Spring league standings formed Division 1. Division 2 consisted of the other 4 teams from the Spring league plus Roach Dynamos, who were picked out of the hat and replaced AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders. Division 3 consisted of the other 4 new teams.

In the October session Peter Thomas of Fleetwood Town Flyers, who normally brings cakes for the after match brew, was collecting for the Macmillan Nurses, a great cause who anybody touched by cancer will testify to. Peter managed to collect a grand total of £135.92 from the teams on the day.

In the final session of the Autumn league in December we were honoured by the presence of ARD German Television, who were filming a news clip 'The Growing Popularity Of Walking Football'. The video can be viewed [HERE](#). Unfortunately most of the commentary is in German.

Third Space Seniors joined Division 3 for this final session, making it 3 divisions of 5 teams. Rochdale AFC Strollers won Division 1 after topping the table every month since September. Nash Amblers were runners up, six points adrift of the Rochdale side.

### Division 1

League Table							
POS		P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	Rochdale AFC Strollers	16	7	8	1	9	29
2	Nash Amblers	16	5	8	3	2	23
3	Chadderton FC WF	16	4	10	2	8	22
4	Vintage Celtic	16	2	8	6	-4	14
5	Rochdale Striders	16	1	8	7	-15	11

*Division 1 Table December 2017*



**Rochdale AFC Strollers Winners Division 1 Over 60s Autumn League 2017**

Division 2 was a close fought affair by AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders and Fleetwood Town Flyers. The Seasiders had led the Flyers all through the four sessions with a 3 point advantage from the October session.

It ended up that way in the final December session with the Seasiders finishing top and the Flyers runners up.

## Division 2

League Table							
POS		P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders	16	7	7	2	8	28
2	Fleetwood Town Flyers	16	5	10	1	8	25
3	Bolton Wanderers A	16	5	9	2	4	24
4	Roach Dynamos	16	4	7	5	-1	19
5	Maccabi Old Codgers	16	1	3	12	-19	6

*Division 2 Table December 2017*



**AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders (In Orange) Winners Division 2  
Over 60s Autumn League 2017**

In Division 3 Bury Relics and Wakefield Wanderers had battled it out over the 4 months with only a maximum of 2 points separating them all season. Both taking it in monthly turns to lead the table. The Wanderers finally winning by a 1 point margin over the Relics. Nash Bees, despite a late surge, lost out to the Relics on goal difference.

## Division 3

### League Table

POS		P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	Wakefield Wanderers	13	4	7	2	6	19
2	Bury Relics	13	4	6	3	6	18
3	Nash Bees	13	4	6	3	2	18
4	Bolton Wanderers B	13	3	3	7	-14	12
5	Third Space Seniors FC	4	1	2	1	0	5

### *Division 3 Table December 2017*



### **Wakefield Wanderer's John Myatt (Right) Winners Division 3 Over 60s Autumn League 2017**

We had a Golden Boot Award for the highest goalscorer and this was shared by Mick Tarpey of Roach Dynamos and Wai Hon Tsang of AFC Blackpool Senior Seaside's with 7 goals each. The Golden Gloves Award went to Pete Smith of Fleetwood Town Flyers with only 2 goals conceded in 16 fixtures.

A presentation and buffet followed the December final session of the 2017 over 60s Autumn league. We also held a raffle in aid of the Stroke Association. This was well supported by our generous teams and £200 was raised.



## **Mick Tarpey (Left) & Wai Hon Tsang (Right) Share The Golden Boot Award**

*A big THANK YOU to Mick Tarpey of Roach Dynamos for the best example of sportsmanship that I have ever see on a football pitch.*

*Mick won a penalty against us and stepped up to take it. Our keeper saved it but the ref (wrongly) said that the kick had to be retaken because Mick has taken more than one step. Mick stepped up to retake the penalty and tapped it to our keeper saying that it was the wrong decision and if he hadn't scored with more than one step then he didn't deserve to score.*

*Mick's sportsmanship cost his team three points and himself the Golden Boot for being top goalscorer BUT he did the right thing. An example to us all.*

*Les Turner, Chairman AFC Blackpool Senior Seasideers*

Another excellent series of Walking Football competitions.

The standard continues to improve and the smooth running of the days is a credit to Bill, Paul and Barry. It is no mean feat keeping 140 plus competitive and highly motivated chaps in line. Congratulations to the referees who have the most difficult job in watching 14 creepers and joggers and combatants all at the same time.

We are looking forward to the extension to the competitions next year to include Over 65 and Over 70 levels. More football for more players. Who will be the first to turn out a 75+ team ? We are getting there.

Have a great Christmas break from competitions, The Senior Seasideers are disappointed that their regular Monday sessions have been cancelled due to Christmas and New Year's Days!! Where is the commitment?

Steve Hyde (AFC Blackpool SS Secretary)

Again many thanks for allowing the Wakefield Wanderers to participate in the GMWF League – it is the best organised league we have seen with referees who have an understanding and awareness of the rules and use them effectively. All the teams in Division 3 are to be commended and we certainly had to win it the hard way – think any of them would not be out of place in Division 2.

We really appreciate the work that Bill, Paul and Barry do in the background to improve and extend the reach of Walking Football to the increasing number of participants.

Niall O'Donnell, Chairman Wakefield Walking Football.



**Peter Smith The Golden Gloves Winner**

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**Over 65s Cup Tournament November 2017**

In November 2017 we held our second over 65s cup tournament. 8 teams in 2 groups of 4 contested this tournament. Group A consisted of Hartshill Strollers, making a 200 mile round journey from the Black Country, Rochdale Striders, Tameside Striders and Vintage Celtic. In Group B were AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders, Chadderton FC WF, Rochdale AFC Strollers and Wakefield Wanderers.

In this round robin format Hartshill Strollers topped Group A with Rochdale Striders runners up. Group B winners were Chadderton FC WF with Rochdale AFC Strollers runners up.

In the semi-finals of the cup knockout stage Hartshill Strollers, winners of Group A, were drawn against Rochdale Strollers, second in Group B. The result was a 1-0 win for the Rochdale side, who were looking to retain the trophy they won in June. In the other semi-final Chadderton FC WF, winners of Group B, beat Rochdale Striders, second in Group A, 2-0 to set up a local final with the other Rochdale team.

The cup final finished in a 0-0 draw and was won on penalties by Rochdale Strollers, who in the event did retain their trophy.



### **Rochdale AFC Strollers Winners Over 65s Cup Tournament November 2017**

The Plate semi-finals knockout stage saw Vintage Celtic, third in Group A, drawn with Wakefield Wanderers, who finished fourth in Group B and at last Celtic found the net in a 2-0 victory. The other semi-final ended in a 0-0 draw between AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders, third in Group B, and Tameside Striders, fourth in Group A. After a marathon eighteen penalty shootout the Striders came through to make the final. The shootout lasted almost as long as the match!

In a keenly contested Plate final Vintage Celtic overcame their neighbours with a 1-0 victory. Despite only winning the consolation Plate prize, as their manager, I was pleased to see that we were the only unbeaten side on the day without conceding a goal.

Top notch competition really well organised and so enjoyable. It's a great way to exercise doing something we all love and meet like minded people. Great after match hospitality. Even the referees on the day were excellent.  
Thank you again.

Keiran Tilley, Bury Relics (Vintage on the day)

An excellent & well organised tournament played in a very sporting manner. Good after-play hospitality & banter, too. Well worth the 200 mile, 5 hour round trip, almost! Thanks for a great day. Bob Haywood, Hartshill Strollers 65+ manager.

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### Autumn Season 2017

<b>Competition</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Runners Up</b>
Over 60s Autumn League Division 1	Rochdale AFC Strollers	Nash Amblers
Over 60s Autumn League Division 2	AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders	Fleetwood Town Flyers
Over 60s Autumn League Division 3	Wakefield Wanderers	Bury Relics
Over 65s Autumn Cup	Rochdale AFC Strollers	Chadderton FC WF
Martin Dawson Trophy	Wakefield Wanderers	Blackburn Rovers WF

### Spring Season 2017

<b>Competition</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Runners Up</b>
Over 60s Spring League	Vintage Celtic	Nash Amblers
Over 65s Spring Cup	Rochdale AFC Strollers	Widnes WF

### Autumn Season 2016

<b>Competition</b>	<b>Winners</b>	<b>Runners Up</b>
Martin Dawson Trophy	Wakefield Wanderers	Vintage Celtic

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