

Greater Manchester Walking Football League History 2020

The League held its first Annual General Meeting on 18th February 2020. It was well attended with twelve of the nineteen clubs represented.

Bill Murney proposed Paul Gardner as the Chairman, this was seconded by Steve Colesby. No other nominations were received.

Garry Pearce proposed Bill Murney as General Secretary, this was seconded by Steve Hyde. No other nominations were received.

Bill Murney proposed Steve Colesby as Treasurer and Fixtures Secretary, this was seconded by Garry Pearce. No other nominations were received.

Kevin Williams proposed Garry Pearce as Referees & Disciplinary Secretary, this was seconded by Ron Blakeley. No other nominations were received.

A vote of thanks was given to all the previous Acting Officers and Barry Woodburn for his work on registering all players and helping to impliment the FA Whole Game System.

The GMWFL Constitution was agreed unanimously by all present.

The FA Whole Game System

The FA Whole Game System was introduced for the 2020 Spring League. This meant that players only had to register their details one time and for future league sessions just check in their names.

Thanks went to our own Barry Woodburn and Lancashire FA officials Andrew Whitaker and Ian Mackie for their valued assistance in setting the system up for us.

GMWFL 2020 Preview

This was published before the Coronavirus pandemic put a halt to all walking football.

In the 2019 60s Autumn league we sadly lost two clubs who were inaugural members of the GMWF League, Chadderton FC and Nash Amblers. Chadderton lost their organiser and no one was willing to fulfil the role. Ageing players took it's toll on the Amblers and they hadn't the squad numbers to continue in the 60s league. Third Space Seniors also dropped out of the 65s league as they failed to register by the time deadline.

The Greater Manchester Walking Football League was now in it's fourth year and was going from strength to strength, with forty four teams involved in 2019. In this GMWFL 2020 preview we looked at our current progress and wondered what 2020 held in store.

In 2018 we had three divisions of five teams in the 60s league. This became four divisions,

three of five teams and one of six teams in 2019.

Chorley FC Yellows and Northgate Strollers both withdrew from the 60s league, unable to field teams. Carlisle Utd, playing as Carlisle SOA (Son's Of Arthritis) joined the 60s league. So we now reverted to four divisions of five teams in the 60s league. A big welcome to Carlisle SOA, who have a round trip of two hundred and forty miles!

In another name change apparently due to the recent European ban for breaching Financial Fair Play Regulations, club licencing and sponsorship deals, Man City were now renamed Manchester Senior Citizens.

Manchester Corinthians Reds were promoted to Division 1, while Chorley FC Magpies (now renamed Purple Panthers WFC), were relegated to Division 2. Promoted to Division 2 were Manchester Corinthians Whites.

AFC Blackpool Senior Seasiders (now renamed Blackpool FC Senior Seasiders) retained their Division 2 status due to Northgate Strollers withdrawing. Promoted to Division 3 were Salcom and Roach Dynamos remained in that division, again through the Northgate Strollers withdrawing.

Former champions Rochdale AFC Strollers and also Tameside Striders withdrew from the 65s league due to lack of players in this age category. The following message was received from the Striders organiser Alan Richards, "We wish all our old opponents good luck going forward in to subsequent leagues at Heywood in the GMWFL. We have had a significant change in outlook and commitment from some of our players in the 65+ categorisation, and further involvement is no longer viable."

The two divisions of five teams in the 65s league was increased to three divisions of five teams in 2019 and in the 2020 Spring season reduced to fourteen teams. Five in Divisions 1 and 2 and four in Divisions 3. New team Maccabi MOC (More Old Codgers) entered the 65s in Division 3.

Promoted to Division 1 were Manchester Corinthians and with Rochdale AFC Strollers and Tameside Striders withdrawing, no team was relegated to Division 2. This means that Preston North End Senior Whites were also promoted to Division 1.

Blackpool FC Senior Seasiders retained their Division 2 status due to teams withdrawing and Fleetwood Town Flyers join them after being promoted from Division 3. Moston Brook FC also moved up to Division 2.

In the over 70s league, Tameside Striders were relegated to Division 2, with Blackpool FC Senior Seasiders promoted to Division 1. The league remains two divisions of four teams.

Complaints were noted that teams only played three games, a total of forty five minutes football. We looked at the possibility of a 70s league of eight teams but unfortunately it wasn't viable due to the pitch allocations and the time slots available. Hopefully this will be rectified in the Autumn league with more 70s teams joining. In the meantime games will be ten minutes each way giving the 70s teams an hours football.

We are holding our first over 70s Invitation Cup Tournament in July 2020 and it's entirely possible that more teams will be encouraged to join our 70s league. In a year or so we will no doubt start with an over 75s Cup Tournament and hopefully this will lead to an over 75s league in the near future.

We also have the annual Martin Dawson Trophy in September. This has always proved to be a popular tournament.

We had a sad start to 2020. Ron Blakely suffered a dislocated and fractured shoulder in a Manchester Corinthians training session, also tearing shoulder ligaments. Unfortunately this meant no more walking football for Ron, who was one of the best keepers in walking football. Ron also shattered his kneecap in a recent fall, it's been a disastrous start for Ron in 2020.

David Seel of Bury Relics passed away in January this year and David Dean of Moston Brook FC suffered a cardiac arrest at one of their training sessions. Fortunately a defibrillator was available and the attending paramedics saved his life. Just to reassure all players, we do have a defibrillator at the Heywood Sports Village, let's hope we never need to use it and don't have any more bad news for the rest of 2020.

Finally, we introduced a few rule changes to hopefully reduce the incidents of physical contact. These were voted on by all teams and league officials who attended the GMWFL AGM on 18th February. The amended Rules and Minutes Of The Meeting were sent to all teams.



Mick Tarpey on 25th February 2020 at 9:57 am said:

Once again thanks to Bill and the rest of the committee that work tirelessly to make the GMWFL the best in the country. Really looking forward to the new season to renew old friendships and old rivalries, OLD being the appropriate word, see you all soon. Mick T, Manchester Corinthians



Ken Phillbin on 23rd February 2020 at 7:18 pm said:

How do you find the time to do all this work? Big respects to the team.

As I put on Facebook etc, yours is probably one of the best run leagues around, keep it up. 🏆🏆🏆🏆



Steve Hyde on 23rd February 2020 at 4:49 pm said:

Also many thanks from Blackpool to the Committee for all the hard work and organization that goes into bringing over 300 elderly footballers together.

This is an unenviable task and we are in excellent hands taking us forward. The fact that the league entices teams from Carlisle, Chester, Wakefield, Fleetwood and Blackpool is testament to the reputation of the set up across the whole of the North West.

Well done guys.



Niall O'Donnell on 23rd February 2020 at 2:39 pm said:

Bill - Many thanks for the comprehensive update and the outline of the leagues for the forthcoming season. The work that goes into organising the GMWF league structure and all the planning along with the day to day activities and the reporting is vast and all the clubs are indebted to you, Paul, Barry and Steve together with Link4life who support and enable us to play competitively. Am sure all are looking forward to another cracking seasons football.



Kevin Williams on 22nd January 2020 at 7:29 pm said:

Fantastic league, well organised by some really good people and contested by a great bunch of lads – and lassies!



Les Turner on 23rd February 2020 at 5:02 pm said:

As Chairman of The Senior Seasideers, I see plenty of Walking Football Competitions. If there is a better competition than this one, I have not seen it!

The organisation is flawless! The officiating is top notch. There is also a commitment from all involved to constantly improve. Well done.

Over 60s Spring League

The first sessions of the over 60s league Divisions 1, 2, 3 and 4 were played in March but on the 16th all football was closed down for the foreseeable future due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

In May we took the decision that with no outlook of any resumption, we had no option but to declare the 60s league void. The 65s and 70s had not played any league games so their leagues together with the voided 60s league would recommence in the Autumn league starting in September.



Mark Wareing on 13th March 2020 at 1:47 pm said:

First time down at Heywood. I was really impressed with the organisation and the standard of the refs. Long may it all continue guys. All teams were very friendly and fair. Only problem I didn't realise it's one step for the penalty so that goal was chalked off. Never mind you live and learn. The Carlisle lads are great, all be it a bit mad. 😊😊



Mick Tarpey on 7th March 2020 at 2:46 pm said:

Wasn't the best day for our teams on the pitch but as always great sportsmanship and spirit among most of the players. Just hope our results get better next month. Would like to say a big well done to the referees for enforcing the walking and non contact rules to the letter, please keep it up. Mick T, Manchester Corinthians

Referees Workshop March 2020

Two weeks before we were closed down by the pandemic, we held a referees workshop on 4th March at the Heywood Sports Village.

The Walking Football Referees Association (WFRA) ran the workshop for the GMWFL referees. It proved to be a great day with professional presentation from Mick Hill and Alan Rose, two of the top referees in walking football.

Eight of our ten referees attended the course and found it extremely beneficial and it can only help to make our excellent group of officials even better. Thanks to Manchester Corinthians who played an hours football in order for Mick and Alan to assess the referees.



WFRA Referees Workshop 4th March 2020



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**Mick Hill & Alan Rose (Centre) With The GMWFL Referees
& Manchester Corinthians WFC**



**5 Of Our 10 Referees Left To Right:
Alan Graham, Keith Burrows, Tim Buckley, Mike Willmore & Garry Pearce**

Autumn League

Hopes of running the Autumn league were dashed by the Government's Tier system that meant many teams from outside the Greater Manchester tier couldn't travel to other tiers to play grassroots football.

Also the fact that a limit of thirty people at any grassroots sporting event confirmed that any hope of a return to league football was impossible.

Just to seal a bad year we lost another player when Jim Morgan of Blackpool Senior Seaside's 65s and 70s teams died in December.

We can only hope that 2021 brings better news and the Spring season goes ahead.
