



CRAIG ALLEN APPOINTED KENT TENNIS LEAD COACH



Kent Tennis are pleased to welcome Craig Allen as the new County Lead Coach. He is no stranger to Kent, having started his tennis and coaching in the Gravesend area aged 16.

His ambition is to make Kent the leading county in British Tennis and will be working closely with Harriet Izzard to manage the County Training Programme, taking responsibility for the philosophy, content and delivery of the training sessions, whilst managing the coaching team. Craig will be part of the selection process for Junior County teams and preparation for County Cup competitions.

Craig joined Bexley LT&SRC where he was appointed Head Coach at 23 and he was invited to be involved in the County training programme supporting Clint Harris, then County Performance Coach. He assisted with the 18U Kent Boys team in 1997/98, and helped build Bexley's reputation as a strong County training base.

In 1999, he became captain of the 13U Kent Boys team. In his first year with the 13Us, his star-studded team of Nick Cavaday, Miles Kasiri, Jack Baker and James Langford played against North of Scotland (that included an 11 year old Andy Murray) and won promotion to Division 1. The team in 2013 were National Champions - James Davis, Nick Brookes, Matt Summers, Jonah Smith, Ethan O'Reilly and Daniel Goodwin, who beat Surrey emphatically 4-0 in the final. They became the 14U team and Craig captained this age group for 20 years, enjoying considerable success reaching the National Finals on numerous occasions.

Craig went onto work at the High Performance Centre based at Bromley Tennis Centre from 2003 to 2010, where he was very fortunate to work with some of the best players Kent have produced, including the following who represented GB:

- *Lewis Burton- Coached 1999-2010 (Runner-Up Junior Wimbledon Boys Doubles, represented GB)*
- *Sean Thornley- Coached 2001-2003 (Represented GB)*
- *Thomas Wright-Coached 2008-2014 (Represented GB, National Champion)*
- *Sasha Hill- Coached 2014-2018 (Represented GB)*

Craig enjoyed travelling extensively both domestically and internationally. He feels that being away at tournaments was the most exciting part of the job and that it was very rewarding to see the players develop and have success at both national and international level.

In 2010, Craig ran his own successful performance programme for players aged 11+, basing the programme at The Park Langley Club from 2013 to 2019 when, after 23 years as a loyal, committed and very successful Kent captain and coach, he moved on to a role in the LTAs National Performance Pathway Team as a Lead County Pathway Coordinator for the Central and East Region.

Accepting his role at Kent LTA, Craig said: *“Having spent my entire coaching career in Kent, I want you to know how thrilled I am to be taking on the role of ‘Kent Tennis Lead County Coach’. I share the passion and dedication in continuing to bring great success to Kent Tennis. I’m confident that we can strive to find ways to make Kent the leading county in British Tennis”*. He said his favourite years were when the boys and girls’ teams were at the Finals together. They travelled together, supported each other and had enormous fun.

In the early days, County Cup was the most important event on any county player's calendar, he says; *“Most of the year juniors play on their own for themselves, but when they get together for County Cup, many seem to achieve better results than they do for the rest of the year”*. He clearly feels that representing your County retains prestige for players, and he looks forward to continuing to renew the excitement around County tennis and team competition again.

In the meantime, I'm sure we all would like to welcome Craig back to Kent Tennis and look forward to seeing our Kent teams competing once more when tennis returns.

