

# *Federation of Crown Green Bowls*

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## **Federation Focus - March**

On 23 April the Federation of Crown Green Bowls will commence its seventeenth Season of National League matches with thirty-five teams taking part, split into seven Divisions, with promotion and relegation in operation throughout and will include all male teams, mixed gender teams, a team of all ladies and be open to all age groups. Those were the guiding principles of Ray Angus, then Chief Executive of the British Parks, as he presented his proposals for the future of British Parks in the twenty-first century at an Extraordinary Meeting at Winnington Park on 30th September 2000. The meeting was to end in some disarray with Ray Angus resigning and the culmination was an exodus of seventeen teams who along with five other teams formed the National League of the fledgling Federation of Crown Green Bowls with the first league matches played in 2001. In all twenty-five associations and Leagues were affiliated to the Federation in its first Season. Keith Etches (Wallasey) became the first president with Bill Booth (Fylde) the Chairman/ Finance Director and Ray Angus the Communications Director and with eight other experienced administrators completing the Board of management. Quick off the mark the Federation promoted its first Merit, dubbed a Winter Warmer, at Burley Park in Leeds on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2000, sponsored by Booths Supermarkets, it was won by Robert Hitchen (Halifax) with Chris Slater (Keighley) the runner-up. Winners of Divisions One through to Five in that first full Season of 2001 were respectively North Shropshire, Preston, Bolton, East Lancashire and South Lancashire and of the five only North Shropshire have departed the scene since those very early days.

Looking forward to 2017 three new teams will be taking part with a Cheshire Parks team new to the Federation, Warrington rejoining after a break of eight years and Doncaster entering a second team once again after a lapse of only one year. Of the Seven Divisions the two currently designated Six A and Six B are mostly regionalised with the A Division mostly in the North West but with one Yorkshire team to add a little bit of War of the Roses spice and the B Division mostly Midlands and Yorkshire with a little bit of Cheshire cheese topping added.

In **Division One** Leeds "A" will be the team to beat having been Champions for the last two years but Halifax who won all of their four matches last Season only to finish second due to fewer individual wins can't be discounted. Middleton, Barnsley and Bury complete the line up with Bury having had three consecutive promotions after yo-yoing between Divisions Three and Four for many years. First fixtures pair Leeds with Middleton whilst Barnsley will play Halifax and Bury will have the bye in April.

**Division Two** has a strong look about it with Fylde “A” and Airedale and Wharfedale dropping down from the top Division to join Nuneaton and the promoted pair of Colne Valley and Wallasey who have together progressed ever upwards in the National League since 2014 when the Huddersfield team first joined the Federation and Wallasey rejoined. On opening day Colne Valley will meet Airedale “A” and Nuneaton take on Fylde “A” with Wallasey having the bye.

Rochdale may be the team to watch in **Division Three** having already experienced life in the top two Divisions and they last Season won the Team Knockout for the third time. Newcomers to the National League in 2016 Liverpool/St Helens had a most impressive first Season and could prove a threat alongside seasoned campaigners Mid Cheshire, North Yorkshire and South Lancashire. Liverpool/St Helens meet Rochdale in an all Lancashire clash for the start of the season, Mid Cheshire face North Yorkshire and South Lancashire will sit this one out.

Dudley were another team to feature strongly in their first Season alongside Liverpool/St Helens and could be a force again this time in **Division Four** but their away team need to be good travellers as they face long trips to Furness and South Lakes and slightly shorter ones to East Lancashire and Ormskirk. The opening day schedule has Ormskirk meeting Furness, Dudley playing East Lancashire and South Lakes having the bye.

In **Division Five** Bolton and Bradford will meet again after topping respectively Division Six (North West) and Division Six (Midlands and Yorkshire) last Season and then finishing joint top of the four team Division Six play-off with twenty points with Bolton emerging victorious as they had superior aggregate scores. This coming Season the two will also face the rejoining affiliate Warrington along with Leeds “B” and Mon Menai. Opening day brings together Bolton and Bradford with Mon Menai taking on Leeds “B” and Warrington having the bye.

Division Six is regionalised as last Season but both sections now have a full five teams so there will be no need for a play-off this year. **Division Six A** sees new affiliate Cheshire Parks joining Burton, Doncaster “A”, UK Police and Airedale and Wharfedale “B” with the first scheduled fixtures Cheshire Parks versus Doncaster “A” and Burton versus UK Police with Airedale having the bye.

In **Division Six B** Doncaster “B”, the team from South Yorkshire, will join the four Lancashire teams, Fylde “B”, Preston, Rochdale Ladies and Southport with Southport down to play Doncaster “B” in the first match whilst Rochdale Ladies are due to meet Fylde “B” with Preston sitting this one out.

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