



# **ACROSS THE NET**

## **Melton Table Tennis**

**August 2016**

### **CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS, VIC OPEN WRAP & LOTS OF OLYMPIC STUFF**

In this edition, we give you the results of the 3 weeks of Club Championships, celebrate our club-mates at the Vic Open, and look at table tennis at the Olympics, both past and present.

### **CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The Club Champions for 2016 have been crowned. This 3-week long feature of our club once again showed the best we have to offer. New names will appear on the perpetual trophies in all categories, which only goes to prove that the club is improving and evolving. Congratulations go to the following players :-

**A Grade Club Champion** is **Gavin Jackson** who beat **Chris Addis** for the title.

The honours in **B Grade** went to **Wayne Atkins** who took down **Graham Huggett** in the final.

**C Grade** saw **Will Corluka** beat **Annemarie Rothwell** in the battle of the student versus the teacher.

The **Handicap Champion** is A-Grader, **Zain Ali Khan** who beat C2 Grader **Connor Ziday** in the race to 31.

**Doubles Champions** for 2016 are **Shannon Camilleri & Connor Ziday** who trumped **Chris Blake & Ahmet Halil**.

The **Shootout** was won by **Matt Camilleri** beating **Steve Batten** by a very narrow margin (obviously).

### **OUR GUYS AT THE VIC OPEN**

On Sunday the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, I travelled in to the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre for the running of the 2016 Victorian Open and Para Championships.

We can congratulate **Chris Addis** for being crowned the **2016 Victorian Champion in Class 1-5**. Although not a large field, no-one should sneeze at a Victorian Championship. Chris also made it through to the semi-finals of the Division 3 Open Doubles with fellow wheelchair competitor, **Graeme Walters**.



Also playing at the Open was **Will Corluka**. Will competed in the **Para Class 6-10** matches where he came up against some tough competition. He also competed in Division 3 Singles and Doubles, and Division 4 Singles and Doubles, making it through to the Division 4 Doubles Semi Finals.

Both Chris and Will represented themselves and the club extremely well and deserve our congratulations.

## **TABLE TENNIS AND THE OLYMPIC JOURNEY**

The time has come, the Walrus said,  
To talk of many things.  
Of forehand loops and backhand lobs,  
In Games that have five rings.

Yes, as *Lewis Carroll* turns in his grave, it's time to discuss table tennis at the **Olympic Games**. A fairly recent event when considered against the fact that the modern Olympics and table tennis came into existence at around the same time.

Table tennis was introduced into the Olympic Games at **Seoul** in **1988** and has been a regular sport since then. However, it hasn't been without some changes. The original format of play was to have competition in Men's & Women's Singles and Doubles, and this format ran from 1988 until 2004. In 2008 the format was altered to be Men's Singles and Team, and Women's Singles and Team.

At the **2012 London Olympics** another change to the format was introduced. Until this time, any nation could enter 3 players into the Singles events. Such was the Chinese dominance of table tennis that the rule was changed to allow only 2 players per country in the Singles events, thus ensuring that a country could not win all three medals in any category.

So let's have a look at what's happened in the past. Of the **28** Gold medals which have been up for grabs since 1988, only **3** nations have taken the top honour. **China** has won **24** of them, putting a stamp on their total dominance of the sport over the past few decades. Of the other 4 golds, three were taken by **South Korea**, and **Jan-Ove Waldner** taking the final one for **Sweden**. **11** countries have grabbed the **28** Silver medals on offer, but again the Chinese dominance is on display with them taking over half of these.

It seems surprising to me, but over these 7 Olympic Games **Japan** has only won a *single Silver medal*

Over the 7 Olympic Games since table tennis was introduced, **94** countries have competed. Of these, only **15** have been at every event, and **Australia** is one of those countries. This puts us in good company when you look at the other nations who have attended all Olympic table tennis events so far. They include powerhouse nations like **China, France, Hungary, Japan, Poland** and **South Korea**.

The number of countries participating has been on the increase as well. Starting off with only **41** countries at the 1988 games, the number has improved to the point that in Beijing and London there were **56** nations competing, and in Rio there will be a slight drop to **54** nations.

For the first time in Olympic table tennis history, **Belgium** will not be competing. Also out are **10** other nations including **Argentina, Denmark & Italy**.

**9** nations will be taking their place, including first time participants **Fiji, The Philippines, Puerto Rico**, and **Syria**.

Our sport is constantly evolving and it's good to see new nations getting experience at the highest level.

## IT NEARLY DIDN'T HAPPEN

You'd think that sporting bodies would be falling over themselves to get into the Olympic Games, wouldn't you? I mean, it's the biggest sporting stage in the world. Yes, most sports have their annual or bi-annual championship, or a major defining competition, but it still seems that everyone wants a slice of the Olympic pie.

One of the main criteria for Olympic membership is that the sport has to be accessible to all nations. This is the main stumbling block for the admission of cricket. Not every country plays it. However, this doesn't seem to stop *surfing* from pushing for Olympic status. Wow. I can only image the queues of people, surfboard tucked under their arm, crowding the beaches of the Central African Republic.

And there are sports in the Olympics which some say aren't popular enough to be there. But I've lost count of the number of times I've been walking down Bourke Street only to bump into people in sparkly costumes throwing clubs into the air. Oh... wait. They may be jugglers busking.

But I digress. As you already know, table tennis was first played as an Olympic sport at Seoul in 1988, but as far back as 1931 there were discussions between the ITTF and the Olympic Committee regarding the inclusion of table tennis. Unfortunately, the exact details of these discussions have been lost over the years, so we don't know how far they got or any reason for the rejection.

There were various other discussions leading up to the 1937 ITTF AGM, where the following notation appears:- **"It was decided to instruct the Advisory Committee to get in touch with the Preparatory Commission for the forthcoming Olympiad in Tokyo with a view to the inclusion of Table Tennis in that Olympiad. All countries in favour except England who were against."**

*What !?!?! England voted against the motion?* The country that invented the game and codified its rules voted against its inclusion into the Olympic Games? As it turns out, the Tokyo Olympics, scheduled for 1940 were cancelled because most of the world had other things on their minds, but we could have been an Olympic sport 48 years before we actually were.

When asked in 1948 about his position on table tennis at the Olympic Games, ITTF president, Ivor Montagu said :- ***"I am opposed to the inclusion of Table Tennis in the Olympic Games. Firstly, I think the Olympic Games should be restricted to Athletics and similar events, where athletes vie with each other, not extend to sports of Football or Lawn Tennis type. Second, I think sports that do not have their own world title competitions need the Olympic Games. We, and similarly Lawn Tennis with the Davis Cup, do not need the Olympics. For us they are a duplication. Lawn Tennis dropped out of the Olympics after, I think, 1924. Third, it is not certain that if we applied we would be successful. If we were refused it would be a rebuff and a humiliation to the game."***

While undoubtedly trying to do the right thing by the game at the time, the decision in retrospect seems rather strange. In fact, after this statement it was not until the retirement of Ivor Montagu that the matter of table tennis in the Olympics was raised by the ITTF again. Montagu's successor, **Roy Evans**, started the proceedings in **1977** and, at the IOC meeting in **1981** it was agreed that table tennis would be included in the **Seoul Olympics in 1988**.

At the **2004 Athens** games, the **2008 Beijing** games and at **London** in **2012**, table tennis was in the **top 5 sports** in terms of television viewers. We hope the trend continues.

### **FROM THE PAST . . .**

Is there a name for a group of 22 people? I can't find one, but there probably should be. If you think about, 22 people is a relatively small group. They could all sit on the same side of a bus. They could be both sides of a soccer match, or one side of an AFL match. They could be the entire audience at a screening of *Zoolander 2*.

If there was a name for a group of 22 people, we could apply it directly to the people in this story, because **22** people have represented Australia in Table Tennis at the **Olympic Games**. And although no Olympic medals have sprung from this group, they have all played their part in creating history in Australian table tennis. So let's have a look at them.

In **1988**, the first games in which table tennis was played Australia was represented by Gary Haberl, Nadia Bisiach and Kerri Tepper.

**Gary Haberl** dominated the Australian table tennis scene for over seven years, winning national titles in all categories, and maintained a consistent ranking of number 1 in the country. He was unbeaten by a fellow Australian player from 1987 through to 1989. He retired from the sport in 1989.

**Nadia Bisiach** was originally from the Coburg club and has won 1 Australian Open and 3 Victorian Opens. She also competed at 3 Commonwealth Games and was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2010.

**Kerri Tepper** has victories in 5 Australian Open Championships, and 3 Oceania Singles Championships as well as many other tournaments. She competed at 2 Olympic and 3 Commonwealth Games. Currently vice-president of the Victorian Olympic Council and a board member of the Australian Olympic Committee, Kerri was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2002.

**1992** saw only Kerri Tepper and Catherine Kwok at the games in Barcelona.

**Catherine Kwok** won the 1991 Australian Championship, together with 3 NSW Singles championships..

In **1996** at Atlanta, Australia was represented by Russell Lavale, Paul Langley, Mark Smythe, Shirley Zhou and Stella Zhou.

**Russell Lavale** is a 3-time Australian Closed Champion and 2-time Victorian Open Champion, and he has represented Australia in 3 Olympic and 2 Commonwealth Games. He was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015. Russell remains active in coaching.

**Paul Langley** won the Australian Champion in 1994 and multiple winner of South Australian Championships. He is currently president of Table Tennis South Australia.

**Mark Smythe** won 2 Victorian Opens and an Oceania Singles Championship. He competed at 2 Olympics and was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015. He now runs a table tennis academy.

**Shirley Zhou** won 3 Victorian Opens, and 4 NSW Championships in succession, as well as an Oceania Singles Championship. She was represented Australia at 2 Olympics and was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2010.

In **2000**, Australia fielded its largest table tennis team at the Sydney Olympics. The team comprised Brett Clarke, Simon Gerada, Russell Lavale, Jeff Plumb, Mark Smythe, Jian Fang Lay, Miao Miao, Shirley Zhou and Stella Zhou.

**Brett Clarke** was originally a member of Melton Table Tennis. He also competed for Australia at Commonwealth Games, winning Silver in Manchester. He is currently head coach of **Table Tennis Fiji**.

**Simon Gerada** has competed for both Australia and Malta at the Commonwealth Games, and has an Oceania Singles Championship as well. He currently holds the record of 11 Victorian Open titles. Simon remains heavily involved in table tennis, as a coach as well as his involvement with HWATT. He was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015. Simon is married to Melissa Tapper.

**Jeff Plumb** has represented Australia in international events as well as the Sydney Olympics, and has served on the board of Table Tennis Victoria. He is currently best known as “the one with hair from PingSkills”.

**Miao Miao** was born in China and grew up in Poland, playing for the Polish national team before moving to Australia. Miao has won 1 Australian Open and 8 Australian Closed Singles Championships as well as 2 Oceania Singles Championships. She has represented Australia at 4 Olympic Games and 4 Commonwealth Games. Miao was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015.

Our Olympic team at the **2004** Athens games was comprised of William Henzell, Russell Lavale, Trevor Brown, David Zalberg, Jian Fang Lay, and Miao Miao.

**William Henzell** represented Australia at 3 Olympic Games, 4 Commonwealth Games and 8 World Championships. He won the Men’s Singles silver medal at the 2006 Commonwealth Games. A 5-time Australian Open Champion, 5-time Oceania Champion, and 7-time Oceania Cup Champion, he is considered by many to be Australia’s greatest table tennis player. The award for the Oceania Cup Men’s event has been named the “**William Henzell Trophy**”.

**Trevor Brown** is best remembered for his play overseas, spending many years in the Swedish, Polish and French leagues. He has since moved back to Melbourne and is still actively playing at the Croydon club.

**David Zalberg** represented Australia at 2 Olympic Games and at Commonwealth Games and World Championship events. David suffered serious injuries in a cycling accident in 2006 and was told that he’d never be able to play table tennis again, but defied the odds and competed at the 2008 Beijing Games.

Our **2008** Olympians were Kyle Davis, William Henzell, David Zalberg, Jian Fang Lay, Miao Miao, and Stephanie Sang.

**Kyle Davis** played in 1 Olympic and 1 Commonwealth games for Australia. He has now completed his university studies and is concentrating on his career in business.

**Stephanie Sang** moved from China to Australia at the age of 15 to complete her schooling. She won the Australian Open in 2005. Gaining her Australian citizenship, Stephanie competed for Australia at 2 Commonwealth Games as well as the Beijing Olympics. She was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015.

At London in **2012**, our team was Robert Frank, Justin Han, William Henzell, Jian Fang Lay, Miao Miao, and Vivian Dederko.

**Robert Frank** has represented Australia at World Cups, World Championships, Commonwealth and Olympic games. Robert works with William Henzell at **TTEdge**.

**Justin Han** was born in China and moved to Australia in 2008 to study. Prior to moving, Justin was a member of the Chinese National Development squad. He qualified for the Australian Olympic team and competed in London.

**Vivian Dederko** was born in China and was an accomplished player there. She gave up the game in 1997, before moving to Australia. In 2007, she took up playing again and has represented Australia at World Championships, Commonwealth and Olympic games.

### ... INTO THE FUTURE

And so we come to the Games of the XXXI Olympiad. Australia will once again compete in the table tennis events, maybe not for the glory of winning a medal, but certainly to participate and celebrate our sport. Australia is sending 6 representatives to these games, and sporting history is being made. Let's have a look at them.



**David Powell** has been playing table tennis since the age of 7, and for his entire playing career has been coached by former Olympian Mark Smythe. He represented Australia at 2014 Commonwealth Games and at the 2015 World Championships. He is currently the highest ranked male player in Australia.

**Chris Yan** was born in China and moved to Australia at the age of 21 to complete his education. He made his debut for Australia at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Chris won his ticket by finishing second to David at the Oceania Selection Trials.



**Heming Hu** started playing table tennis at home and followed his brother into competition at the Dandenong club. The 22 year old competed for Australia at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Heming was lucky to receive a call-up for Rio, only gaining his ticket after another Oceania competitor dropped out.

**Jian Fang Lay** will become only the second Australian to compete at 5 Olympic Games. The 43-year-old, still the highest ranked female player in the country, has much experience to fall back on. She has won 4 Silver and 3 Bronze medals in 4 Commonwealth Games for Australia. Jian was inducted into the Victorian Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015.



**Melissa Tapper** will make Australian sporting history by becoming the first athlete to compete at both the Olympics and Paralympics, and will be only the second table tennis player in the world to do this. Melissa took up table tennis at the Hamilton club when she was 8, made the Australian team at 14, and was Australia's top-ranked junior at 18. Finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at the London Paralympics, and competing at the 2014 Commonwealth Games as well as the 2016 World Teams Championships, Melissa has plenty of international experience and is looking forward to a good competition.



**Sally Zheng** will represent Australia in the Teams competition at Rio. Born in China, Sally moved to Australia in 2011 and competed in the 2014 Commonwealth Games where she won a Bronze medal. Sally also played for Australia at the 2016 World Teams Championships in Kuala Lumpur.



At the seven Olympic table tennis events held to date, Australia has not featured in the medals. We didn't bring one home from England, nor did we bring home a Chinese, Greek, Australian, American, Spanish or Korean medal. We can only hope that one of our team comes home with a Brazilian.

## **AUGUST TOURNAMENTS**

The main tournament for August is taking place in Rio, but if you've read this far, you probably know that already.

On the local scene, **Yarrawonga** are holding their Junior Open on **Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup>**, and the Senior Open on **Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup>**.

On the **21<sup>st</sup>**, **Mornington** are holding their Open Veterans tournament, and on **Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup>** **Geelong** are running their Senior Open tournament.

## **ON THE WEB / TV**

This edition has been predominantly focused on the Olympics, so let's keep the theme running. The host broadcaster in Australia is the Seven Network. They had the exclusive rights to show these Games as well as the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. So I guess we can look forward to an ad break as soon as the Men's 100 metre final starts.

The table tennis events in Rio take place from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, with the Men's and Women's Singles being followed by the Team's events. We can only hope that Channel 7 and their affiliates give some air-time to our sport.

Some websites which you may find useful over the next few weeks :-

[www.ittf.com](http://www.ittf.com)

[www.tabletennisdaily.co.uk](http://www.tabletennisdaily.co.uk)

[www.tabletennista.com](http://www.tabletennista.com)

[www.tabletennis.org.au](http://www.tabletennis.org.au)

*What's your favourite table tennis site on the web?* Let us know so we can share it with other members.

Are you a member of our facebook page? Search for **Melton Table Tennis** on Facebook and join in our conversations. Don't forget, you can find our web page at **www.meltontabletennis.com**. Make us your home page.

## **YOUR FEEDBACK**

This is *your* club and *your* opinions are valid and valued. If you have any comments to make on the contents of this newsletter, or if you have any suggestions or information for future editions please let us know.

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