



# **ACROSS THE NET**

## **Melton Table Tennis**

**February 2016**

### **WELCOME, SERVES UP, AND THE CLOWN PRINCE RETIRES**

Our first edition of the new year has the details of our Summer season, we study the service rules in detail, review the stars of 2015, hear from an Olympic hopeful, and celebrate the career of a great entertainer.

### **WELCOME BACK**

We're back for another year! After a very successful 2015, MTTA is looking at bigger and better things for 2016 and beyond. We have secured our playing venue for 2016, and have already had a couple of weeks to try to get back in shape and ready to play.

Some of us might be a bit stiff in the joints after the break, but it won't take long to get moving and competitive again. Personally, I tried to keep my joints lubricated by means of apple cider. For the record, it didn't actually make movement any easier, but I didn't seem to care as much.

If you are new to the club, welcome. If you have any questions about the club, or would like to get some help with your game, just ask us. We have players who can assist and advise you on all aspects of the game, its rules, and equipment.

We are again starting our year with a 5-week season, with 2 weeks of finals. For the first season, payment of \$7 per night can be made prior to play each Thursday night. The hall is open at 7:00pm for set-up and we expect all matches to get underway at 7:30 sharp.

Orders are currently being taken for club shirts and shorts. Shirts are club-subsidised for the first shirt to \$20, and \$30 for any additional shirts or shorts. Your name can be printed on the shirt for no additional cost. Order forms will be available from the front desk.

If you haven't already filled in a TTV membership form for the 2016 season, make sure that you grab one from the front desk, fill it in, and return it with the appropriate fees as soon as possible. If you are not registered with TTV, you are not eligible to play at MTTA.

### **WWW.MELTONTABLETENNIS.COM**

Our website is now up and running. We're still taking baby steps in getting it the way we want it, but it will soon hold all the relevant information you will need, including fixtures and match results. Our thanks go to **Rob Katsipis** for his assistance in getting us sorted with this.

If you have anything you feel would be worthwhile to include on the website, please feel free to contact the committee.

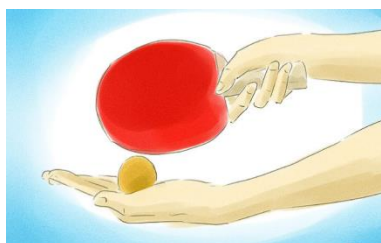
And, as always, if you have any contribution or suggestions for this newsletter, just contact me with the information. Contact details are on the last page.

## **THE SERVICE RULE IN DETAIL**

I've recently been speaking to both national and international players about our game. When I ask them what their main gripe with table tennis is, they all answer the same; *the service rule*.

Seeing it's the start of a new year for our club, I thought we should take a look at this in detail to make us all aware of the responsibility we have, both when playing and when umpiring. I know we all love winning, but let's make sure that the victory is all the sweeter because it was done within the rules.

So, let's look at the first section of the service rule, which states;



***Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary hand.***

This seems fairly straight-forward, but at club level it is probably one of the most ignored rules in our game. The ball cannot be gripped by the fingers or hidden by the closed hand. It must rest perfectly visible on the open palm.

The next part of the rule states that; ***The server shall then project the ball near vertically upwards, without imparting spin, so that it rises at least 16cm after leaving the palm of the free hand and then falls without touching anything before being struck.***

Simply speaking, the ball has to be thrown up at least 16cm (6 inches), or roughly the height of the net. It is not allowed to be struck straight off the hand. You can't strike the ball when it is on the way up. It must be falling. And it ***must*** be thrown up. Even at last year's Victorian Open I saw a top level player raising the ball on his hand and then dropping it. The umpire should have called him for that, but didn't.

And "near vertically upwards" means *near vertically upwards*. Not purposely backward or sideways in an effort to generate more spin. The rule allows for the fact that there may be some minor deviation in the ball from a 90 degree vertical toss and drop, but it should not be intentionally thrown at an angle.

Part 3 is self-explanatory, so we'll skip to part 4 which says; ***From the start of service until it is struck, the ball shall be above the level of the playing surface and behind the server's end line, and it shall not be hidden from the receiver by the server or his or her doubles partner or by anything they wear or carry.***

So the hand with the ball freely resting on the palm must be *behind* the end of the table and cannot drop lower than the level of the table. Simple enough.

The second part of this is where the top level players bend the rules further than something that bends things can bend something that bends really easily. (Alright. I know, but let's see you come up with something better). The ball cannot be hidden from the receiver at any time from the start of the service action until it is struck. You are not permitted to hide it with your free arm, your body, your head, your bat, or your clothing.

Part 5 states; ***As soon as the ball has been projected, the server's free arm and hand shall be removed from the space between the ball and the net. The space between the ball and the net is defined by the ball, the net and its indefinite upward extension.***

Get your hand out of the way! It's as simple as that. This part is designed to make sure that you are not trying to hide your serve by using your free arm to block your opponent's vision.

Part 6 says; ***It is the responsibility of the player to serve so that the umpire or the assistant umpire can be satisfied that he or she complies with the requirements of the Laws, and either may decide that a service is incorrect.***

Do the right thing. That's what this means. And expect to be called for a bad serve if the umpire sees it is not correct.

This rule continues, saying; ***If either the umpire or the assistant umpire is not sure about the legality of a service he or she may, on the first occasion in a match, interrupt play and warn the server; but any subsequent service by that player or his or her doubles partner which is not clearly legal shall be considered incorrect.***

So the umpire can call a let and warn you. If you decide to try your luck and do it again in the same match, you can be called for serving a fault and the point will be awarded to your opponent.

Part 7 doesn't really apply to anyone at the club at the moment, but states; ***Exceptionally, the umpire may relax the requirements for a correct service where he or she is satisfied that compliance is prevented by physical disability.***

If this needs to be done, the committee will inform players and officials at the time.

So let's all be aware that there are rules which govern the serve. No, we're not playing for sheep stations, but trying to do the right thing and playing within the rules of the game should be reward enough.

## **FEBRUARY TOURNAMENTS**

The tournament season is back under way with some big ones.

The 19<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> sees the **Australian Olympic Qualification** tournament being played in Tweed Heads.

On the local scene, MSAC will be hosting the **Victorian Closed Junior** Championship on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and will be preparing for the crush of mobility scooters in the carpark when they host the **Victorian Closed Veterans** Championship on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

From the 28<sup>th</sup> of February to the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, the **World Team Championships** are being played in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. With this being an Olympic year, many countries will be treating this as a warm-up event, so the competition should be intense.

The Australian Men's Team of **Wade Townsend, David Powell, Heming Hu** and **Erny Tsao** are currently ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in the world, and will be competing in *Division 2, Group H*, against **Spain** (24<sup>th</sup>), **Serbia** (25<sup>th</sup>), **Bulgaria** (35<sup>th</sup>), **Latvia** (44<sup>th</sup>), and **Puerto Rico** (51<sup>st</sup>).

The Australian Women's Team comprising **Jian Fang Lay, Michelle Beaumont, Miao Miao** and **Melissa Tapper** are ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in the world and will compete in *Division 3, Group J*, against **Uzbekistan** (58<sup>th</sup>), **Estonia** (59<sup>th</sup>), **Congo Brazzaville** (69<sup>th</sup>), **Algeria** (72<sup>nd</sup>), and **Nepal** (86<sup>th</sup>).

Matches should be available to be viewed on [www.ittf.com/tv](http://www.ittf.com/tv).

## ITTF STAR AWARDS

At the end of each year, the ITTF hold a star-studded function to honour the best players of the year. It's like our presentation night, but with glitter. The 2015 awards ceremony was held in **Lisbon, Portugal** in December, and the winners were:-

- Male Player of the Year:** **Ma Long** (China)  
Other nominees were **Fan Zhendong** (China), **Jun Mizutani** (Japan) and **Dimitij Ovtcharov** (Germany)
- Female Player of the Year:** **Liu Shiwen** (China)  
Other nominees were **Ding Ning** (China), **Kasumi Ishikawa** (Japan) and **Petrissa Solja** (Germany)
- Coach of the Year:** **Liu Guoliang** (China)  
Other nominees were **Viorel Imon** (Romania) and **Qian Qianli** (Austria)
- Best Breakthrough Player:** **Mima Ito** (Japan)  
Other nominees were **Hugo Calderano** (Brazil) and **Jang Woojin** (Korea)
- Male Para Player of the Year:** **David Jacobs** (Indonesia) (Class 10)  
Other nominees were **Viktor Didukh** (Ukraine) (Class 8), and **Thomas Schmidberger** (Germany) (Class 3)
- Female Para Player of the Year:** **Borislava Peric-Rankovic** (Serbia) (Class 4)  
Other nominees were **Yang Qian** (China) (Class 10) and **Bruna Costa Alexandre** (Brazil) (Class 10)

The **Star Point Award** was won by **Fang Bo** (China) and **Ma Long** (China) for their breath-taking power rally in the World Championships.

But for me, the most deserving award on the night was the **Fair Play Award** given to **Linor Ciraku** and **Vlona Maluku** of **Kosovo**. On the first day of the 2015 World Championships, their opponents, **Harshill Shah** and **Sejal Thakkar** from **Kenya** both failed the racket testing process and had no spare rackets with them, which meant they would have to forfeit the match.

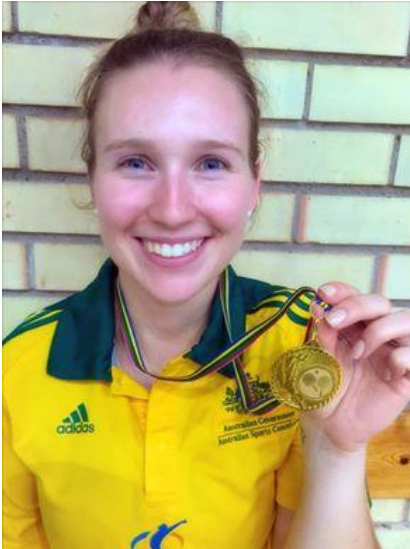
In a gesture of goodwill and sportsmanship, Ciraku and Maluku lent the Kenyan pair their spare rackets so that the match could continue. Linor Ciraku said, *"We cannot play like the best players here, but I hope it shows we love the sport"*. Vlona Maluku agreed. *"You should never settle for just the simple answer"*, she said. *"You must do what is correct"*.

And so say all of us.



## LET'S GET BEHIND OUR ATHLETES

As you are all aware, 2016 is an Olympic year. Rio is not far away, and over the next few editions of *Across The Net*, we'll be ramping up our focus on the Games and on our athletes who are striving to get there. Ladies first.



In September last year, the ABC reported that **Melissa Tapper** is “... on track to become the first Australian to compete in both the Olympics and Paralympics.”

Most players would be happy with a string of Gold, Silver and Bronze medals from Para Open, Oceania, and World Championships, but not Melissa.

After a fourth place finish at the **2012 London Paralympics**, Melissa took out a Bronze medal in the Women's Team event at the **2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games**. Melissa was nominated for the **2014 ITTF Star Awards Female Para Player of the Year**.

With a **World Ranking** of **number 4** in Class 10, and 390 in the overall World Women's rankings, Melissa is doing everything possible to gain selection to the Australian team for the Rio Olympics. She recently put up the following on her facebook page and has kindly given us permission to publish it here.

**Everyone at some point in their lives are faced with that moment of when we need to take a leap to get to where we want to go.....taking it can be so god damn scary and even daunting, and some people around you will have their own opinion on what you are wanting to do... But it is your leap and your choice, make it and give it everything you have. I went for it two years ago and qualified for the Commonwealth Games, I'm still pushing to close the gap though and I'm putting everything I have into qualifying for the OLYMPICS! It excites me, it frightens me, but I know where I have been and what I am capable of. I regret none of it. Come on Rio2016**

**#teamtapper #rio #lets go**



I'm sure all readers of *Across The Net* will join me in wishing Melissa every success, not only in her quest to represent Australia at the Rio Olympics, but also in pushing down the barriers between para and able-bodied athletes.

And if you're ever looking for something to do on a Thursday night, Melissa, we could certainly fit you in to a spot somewhere at Melton Table Tennis.

## A TRUE CHAMPION RETIRES

Ahhh, Belgium. Famous for chocolate, beer, and not being France. Birthplace of actress **Audrey Hepburn**, actor **Jean-Claude Van Damme**, fictitious detective **Hercule Poirot**, and inventor of the saxophone, **Adolphe Sax**, life can get pretty crazy there; mainly due to the chocolate and beer.

In 1969, into this world, a child was born. The son of 2 table tennis players, **Jean-Michel Saive** was destined to take up the sport of his parents. His father was the tenth ranking Belgian player and his mother won the Belgian Ladies' Doubles Championships when she was pregnant with him.

At the age of 13, Jean-Michel was the fourth-ranked Belgian player and was invited to join the national team. 2 years later, in 1985, he won the National Championship, becoming the leading player in Belgium. In an incredible feat of endurance, Jean-Michel would hold the top position in Belgium until it was taken over by a player more than 20 years his junior in 2015. During those 30 years, he won the Belgian Singles Championship *25 times*.



In **1988**, when table tennis was introduced into the **Olympic Games**, Jean-Michel was selected to play for Belgium, and he has played for Belgium in every Olympic Games since then. In the **1996 Atlanta Olympics** and in the **2004 Athens Olympics** he was given the honour of being the flag-bearer for the Belgian team at the opening ceremony.

Never losing his spontaneity, his smile, or his improbable rolled up shorts, he has, over the years, also built a track record which is impressive at both European and world levels. Although he never won a World Championship, he still managed to make the **world number one** position for 15 months in 1994 and 1995; something he rates as his proudest achievement.

His successes made him the best Belgian table tennis player, but he is also considered to be one of Belgium's most prolific athletes and he was elected as **Sports Personality of the Year** in *1991* and *1994*. Well known for his sportsmanship, he was awarded the **UNESCO World Award for Fair Play** in *1989*. In December *2014*, the Royal Belgian Federation of Table Tennis (FRBTT) had appointed Jean-Michel Saive their "**player of the year**" for the *tenth* time.

Off the table, his contribution to Belgian and world sport is outstanding. He is chairman of the **Athletes Commission at the Belgian Olympic Committee (COIB)** and serves on the **European Olympic Committee's Athletes' Commission**. In October *2014*, he was appointed a director of COIB, and also became an advisor to the Belgian Minister of Sports.



An exhibition match between Jean-Michel and **Chuang Chih-Yuan** in *2014* has been labelled "*The Funniest Match in History*". If you've never seen this match, I **urge** you to watch it. It's a perfect display of a very talented player having a lot of fun and providing enjoyment for all (except the poor official). Just **click here** to watch the match.

When asked how to be successful in table tennis, he said, "*Hard, hard, hard, hard practice.... And think table tennis all the time, but most important is to enjoy all this*".

In December last year, Jean-Michel Saive retired after 32 years of competitive play. With 130 medals in International Singles competitions, a European Championship, 7 Olympic Games appearances, and many other achievements and awards, he well deserves the rest. But I have a feeling that we haven't heard the last of him.

### **MALAYSIA IN TROUBLE OVER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNUB**

Although the World Teams Championship will go ahead in Kuala Lumpur at the end of February, **Malaysia** may be sanctioned and possibly excluded from hosting future major table tennis events.

The Malaysian government is refusing to issue visas to the table tennis team from **Israel**. Reports have suggested that even if the Israeli team is included in the championships, their flag and national anthem could be barred from the event venues. Israel missed the World Youth Sailing Championships held in Malaysia in December last year over similar problems with visas.

We can only hope that a sense of fair play can triumph for the sake of our sport.

### **ADIDAS PULLS OUT OF TABLE TENNIS**

Adidas ended its short-lived association with table tennis at the end of 2015. Entering the sport in 2007, they stated that their aim was to be the market-leader by 2017. In a marketplace with so many long-established brands such as Andro, Stiga, Butterfly, Donic, and DHS, this was undoubtedly a big call and one which they definitely under-estimated.

The Adidas table tennis website is still up, and shows no information about the pull-out, however the product catalogues have been removed from the site.

### **ON THE WEB**

[www.gregsttpages.com](http://www.gregsttpages.com) is run by Perth-based player **Greg Letts**. Greg has been around the Australian table tennis scene for the past 30 years. His site features a Forum, Video Coaching section and Articles on a wide range of table tennis topics.

*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](http://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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