



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

February 2018

Edition 42

2018 PREVIEW, NEW WORLD CHAMPS, STAR AWARDS, & STAR SIGNS

In this edition, we look forward to another year, look back on our presentation night, discuss the annual Star Awards, gaze at your star sign, and provide further proof that left-handers may not be perfect, but are damn close to it.

WE'RE BACK

Another year kicks off, and after a false start, it's going to be a big one. The extra week off wasn't planned by us, but was due to the hall not being ready for the start of our season. However, we've now started back with our practice and grading nights, and our new **Handicap** competition is underway. Don't worry if you haven't joined in yet. You can play in the Handicap competition on any practice night throughout the season and there is still plenty of chances to qualify for a spot in the finals.

Our first season of pennant commences on **Thursday the 8th of February** and will be a **5-week** season to work out all the Christmas kinks.

Nationally and internationally, this year sees the **Commonwealth Games** being played on the **Gold Coast** in April, the **ITTF World Tour Platinum Event** on the **Gold Coast** in July, and the **ITTF World Junior Championships** being played at **Bendigo** in December.

PRESENTATION NIGHT A ROARING SUCCESS

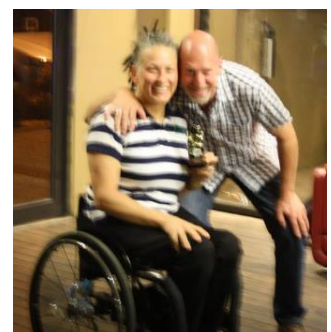
What a great night we had at our **2017 Presentation Night**. Good food, great atmosphere, wonderful friends, and **over 90** trophies going to **nearly 50** very deserving winners.



But, by far the best part of the evening was having 6-time Paralympian, **Danni Di Toro** as our guest speaker and presenter. In a talk that moved everyone listening, Danni spoke of her challenges and experiences, motivating all of us to try a little harder and to be more appreciative of what we have within our community and within ourselves.

Danni was extremely generous with her time, and helped us present the Club Champion awards to the 2017 winners.

Having such a sporting champion and inspirational person at our club is something that those who attended will not forget for a long time.



SIZZLE SIZZLE

On the **14th of January**, we held our first fund-raiser of the year with a sausage sizzle at **Coles Supermarket**, Melton South.

On a day cool enough to be classed as closer to winter than summer, sales were steady if not vigorous, but provided the opportunity to get out amongst the community and spread the word about our club and our sport.

More of these events will be held prior to the commencement of each season, and we will be calling for volunteers to assist closer to those dates.

NEW TOP DOGS

With the start of the new year comes the new world ranking list and a new World Number one. As a direct consequence of the new rankings calculations, **Germany's Dimitrij Ovtcharov** has taken the top spot on the Men's rankings. This is the first time that a non-Chinese player has held the top position since 2013 when ironically, it was another German, **Timo Boll**, at number one.

The new calculation method takes a player's **best 8** results from the previous 12 months, meaning that participation now becomes a critical factor in deciding the rankings.

The new ranking method has caused a lot of movement amongst all players, and while it may take some time to settle down, it certainly makes for interesting reading. On the Men's side, with Ovtcharov moving to number 1, **Fan Zhendong (China)** remains at number 2. **Timo Boll (Germany)** moves up to third, followed by **Lin Gaoyuan (China)** and **Xu Xin (China)**.

Former number one, **Ma Long (China)** drops to 7, while another former number 1, **Zhang Jike (China)** drops from 9 to 54, both due to inactivity. The biggest drop in the top 100 belongs to **Panagiotis Gionis (Greece)** who dropped 56 places from 39 to 95. And the player to take the largest advantage and move into the top 100 is **Kanak Jha (USA)** who jumped 110 places from 200 to 90.

The Women's rankings show even more movement. **Chen Meng (China)** is the new number 1, replacing **Zhu Yuling (China)** who drops to number 2. **Feng Tianwei (Singapore)** jumps from 11 to 3, followed by the Japanese trio of **Kasumi Ishikawa**, **Mima Ito** and **Miu Hirano**.

Former number 3, **Ding Ning (China)** has dropped to 21, and **Liu Shiwen (China)** has dropped from 4 to 24. The largest drop in the top 100 was **Sun Yingsha (China)** who dropped 45 places from 7 to 52.

Australia's own Jian Fang Lay had a boost, moving up 52 places from 118 to 66. There were 6 women who made massive gains by jumping over 100 places on the new list, with **Paulina Vega (Chile)** jumping 210 spots from 263 to 53.

Other Aussies to benefit from the changes include **David Powell** who moves from 336 to 119, **Kane Townsend** who goes from 390 to 184, and **Melissa Tapper** who jumps from 404 to 195.

Please be patient. Normal service will be resumed shortly.

2017 STAR AWARDS

This dazzling occasion was held at the same time as our presentation night, but still attracted a reasonable crowd to **Astana**, the capital city of **Kazakhstan** (but regular readers knew that already, didn't you).

This annual ceremony hands out some awards based on popularity, while others are judged by a panel of experts, and some by a combination of both. Imagine the Logie's if people really cared. This year a total of 8 awards were handed out. Eight. Just eight.

The award for the **Male Table Tennis Star** (by popular vote and judges input) went to **Timo Boll** of **Germany**, who took the award over his compatriot **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**, **Ma Long** from **China**, and **Japan's Tomokazu Harimoto**.

The **Female Table Tennis Star** for 2017 was **China's Ding Ning**, taking the award for the third time. Others who were in the running were **Zhu Yuling** from **China**, **Miu Hirano** from **Japan**, and **Cheng I-Ching** of **Chinese Taipei**.

Ding Ning also won the popular vote for the **Best Point of the Year** for the lightning fast rally against **Zhu Yuling** at the World Championships earlier in the year.

Tomokazu Harimoto took out the **Breakthrough Star award**. This was based on his being the youngest ever **World Tour Singles Champion**, as well as being the youngest ever **World Championship Quarter-finalist**. The other contenders, **Sun Yingsho** of **China** and **Ioannis Sgouropoulos** from **Greece** didn't really stand a chance.

The **2017 Star Awards Coach of the Year** went to **Jorg Roskopf** of **Germany** for his efforts in getting Dimitrij Ovtcharov and Timo Boll to European Championship victory as well as several World Tour titles and victory at the World Cup. The other nominees were **Yu Harimoto** from **Japan** (Tomokazu's dad), and **Viorel Filimon** from **Romania**. Note the absence of Chinese coaches in this list.

The **Star Awards Male Para Player of the Year** is **Class 8** World number one, **Viktor Didukh** from **Ukraine**. Viktor beat out **Joo Young Dae** from **North Korea** and **Thomas Schmidberger** from **Germany**.

Neslihan Kavas, a **Class 9** player from **Turkey** took out the **Female Para Player** of the Year over **Jung Young A** from **North Korea** and **Wang Rui** from **China**.

As usual, my favourite award each year is the **Fair Play award**. This award is proof that the vast majority of players, even at the top level, play to win, but also to enjoy the contest on a level playing field.

This year's Fair Play award went to Frenchman **Irvin Bertrand**. At the **Belarus Open**, Bertrand's opponent's bat failed the control test and was declared not suitable for use. As his opponent didn't have a spare bat with him, Bertrand could have claimed victory without taking to the table, but instead he lent his spare bat to his opponent so that the match could go ahead.

Who said chivalry is dead?

AND THE LEFTIES SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH

Have you ever heard of “high time-pressure” sports? Neither had I. But according to a recent study by **Dr. Florian Loffing** from the **University of Oldenburg** in **Germany**, I should have an advantage in them.

Dr. Loffing has done a study of left-handers in the world rankings of ball games and has discovered that, in general terms, the faster the game, the more left-handers there are in the top of the rankings. He found sports with high time-pressure – that is, a shorter period between the ball bouncing between racquets, or leaving a bowler’s or pitcher’s hand and striking the bat - were also those with the most lefties. This was based on data collected for the top 100 tennis, table tennis, badminton, and squash players, the top 100 test cricket bowlers, and the top pitchers in Major League Baseball, from 2009 to 2014.

Table tennis, as we know, is an incredibly fast game. Dr Loffing found **26%** of the top men and **19%** of the top women were lefties – twice that of the normal population rate of 10%. Around **30%** of baseball pitchers are left-handed, as are nearly **22%** of cricket bowlers. But badminton, squash and tennis left-handed rates approached or dropped below the average population rate. In the upper echelon of squash, there are relatively few left-handers, but this might also be due to the fact that opponents don’t directly face each other, rendering any left-handed advantage moot.

Dr. Loffing’s work has been in the area of the “fighting hypothesis” of left-handed evolution. The theory is that, being a minority, southpaw’s have the element of surprise in a fight and can bamboozle their opponent who might be used to fighting righties. This, combined with the fact that faster sports give their opponent less time to react can give lefties an advantage.

It’s thought this is why left-handers are over-represented in “interactive” sports such as cricket and table tennis, but not in “non-interactive” sports, such as snooker.

While time pressure isn’t the only factor at play when it comes to lefty-domination, “...it’s *one important point to consider when trying to understand why left-handers can have an advantage*”, said Dr. Loffing.

According to **Victoria University** sports scientist, **Damien Farrow**, being left-handed definitely helps sportspeople in some way, shape or form... to a point. “*When you get to the elite level it’s not as strong an effect,*” he said. “*The higher up you go, the better your opponents are at working you out pretty damn quick.*”

But another interesting question arises from this. Melton Table Tennis has approximately **60** members. At the rate represented in the figures above (26%), there should be around 15 or 16 lefthanders amongst us. Even at the normal population rate of 10%, there should be about 6. *But there are only 2.* Why? We’ll investigate that another time.

So let me leave you with this. With so many left-handers at the top of the world rankings in a number of sports, some people think that the left-handed advantage makes us elitist.

Let me clarify. Left-handers are not elitist. We’re just better than the rest of you.

YOUR STAR SIGN AND THE WAY IT AFFECTS YOUR GAME

Yesterday I went into a pet shop and said, "I want to buy a goldfish." The guy said, "Do you want an aquarium?" I said, "I don't care what star sign it is."

I recently read an article which supposedly matched your table tennis game style with your star sign. Now, I'm not going to deride people who believe that their existence has been predefined by the time of year they were born, but really?!?!? Why not tarot card reading prior to a tournament to see whether or not you should even play? (I once played poker with tarot cards. I got a full house and 4 people died.)

However, I know that many people put their faith in such things, so I'm putting my skepticism aside for a short period and simply reporting on what I read. Zodiac Signs supposedly reveals many characteristics about a person. This article (author unnamed, and probably for good reason) purported to show personality traits associated with a person's playing style. So, in the interest of fairness, let's have a look at the various star signs to work out whether or not it is worth your while continuing to participate in physical activity. See what you think.

Aries (21 March-19 April)

They have a competitive nature. They dislike boredom. They like fast paced challenging matches. They show aggression and have a strong focus on their tactics. They have warrior qualities that can withstand even the toughest conditions.

Taurus (20 April-20 May)

Strongest attributes of Taurus are stamina and endurance. They have strong willpower and can practice for a long duration. They are predictive and choose their tactics very carefully. They are more interested in process than scoring and don't really care about winning. They are best at Doubles.

Gemini (21 May-21 June)

They love movement which helps them to cover all of the table. They think, plan and act fast. They have the ability to play under pressure. They have talent in observing and collecting information. They research their opponents and strategize the match.

Cancer (22 June-22 July)

They are quietest people. They are energetic and confident, but not much into competition. They enjoy playing, but not competing. They can be very strong and brave in some cases of difficulty and weak and defenseless at others.



Leo (24 July-23 August)

They need to win and have the urge to be number one. Whatever sport they play they practice relentlessly until they master it. Their generous behaviour is shown by helping weaker players as a coach.

Virgo (24 August-24 September)

Virgo's are perfectionists. They research and practice until they feel they have reached the level of perfection they are comfortable with. Their practice routine is in the most organised manner.

Libra (24 September-23 October)

Libra can achieve very good results and everyone will be fascinated by them. They find balance in everything. They can play fast paced using heavy backspin. Work best when they have a partner.

Scorpio (24 October-22 November)

Scorpio's have a passionate desire to achieve goals. They have the power to transform themselves to play like anyone. The capacity of renewing themselves in difficult times helps in being better players. Hiding their emotions confuses their opponents.

Sagittarius (23 November-21 December)

Sagittarius is restless and curious. They don't settle, this leads to fast movement in their play. They are open to new things. Changing their style of play is the best way for them to excel. They get bored easily.

Capricorn (22 December – 22 January)

Capricorns are bold and brave. They have responsibility and start their practice at an early age. In their game, one can see their focus and concentration.

Aquarius (21 January-19 February)

Aquarius are born to rebel. Their unpredictable nature scares their opponent. Aquarius has a nature to do things which are not common. Their way of playing the game has unusual moves, tricking their opponent. Aquarius coaches train their players in special and creative ways.

Pisces (19 February-20 March)

Many Pisces are not fond of sports, but when they become a part of it, their weakness and shyness are gone. Not suited to Doubles, they prefer to be an individual player. Their game shows lots of patience as they wait for right time to make a big shot to get a point. They are afraid of taking risks which make their moves predictable.

OK. Time to throw the "skepticism" switch back into overdrive.



FEBRUARY TOURNAMENTS

Internationally, the **World Team Cup** will be held in **London** from the **22nd** to the **26th** of **February**.

Locally, the **Ballarat Senior and Junior Open** will be held, not surprisingly, in **Ballarat** on **Saturday** the **17th**. Grab a quick nap in your car and then head to Eagle Stadium in **Werribee** for the **Victorian Closed Veteran Championships** on **Sunday** the **18th**.

ON THE WEB

From time to time, it's necessary to remind ourselves that our main controlling body, the ITTF, provide an excellent website (www.ittf.com) covering all of the news from table tennis events around the world. As well as that, you can access the ITTV website to live stream matches from all major tournaments, or watch them on replay.

Hey also provide links to the Rankings and statistics of players in the various ITTF-sanctioned circuits.

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

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