



# **ACROSS THE NET**

## **Melton Table Tennis**

**February 2019**

**Edition 52**

### **2019 PREVIEW, STARS OF LAST YEAR, STAR AWARDS WRAP, STARS AT PLAY, & MUCH MORE**

In this edition, we look forward to another year, look back on our presentation night, discuss the annual Star Awards, discuss the only American to win a Singles World Championship, and talk about government funding (or the lack of it).

### **WE'RE BACK**

Another year kicks off, and it's going to be a big one. The practice nights were well attended and introduced quite a few new faces to the club. We are already underway with our Summer season, and it's great to see the hall full of happy, competitive people enjoying themselves. Over the next few months we can hopefully unveil some new initiatives around the club. Stay tuned for news to come.

### **PRESENTATION NIGHT A ROARING SUCCESS**

What a great night we had at our **2018 Presentation Night**. Good food, marvellous music, great atmosphere, wonderful friends, and **over 100** trophies going to **nearly 60** very deserving winners.

Our club band, **Ping Pong** had everyone entertained with some great music all night long. Many thanks to **Simon Reich, John Batty** and **Josh Dias** for playing some great tunes all through the night.



And how lucky we were to have Olympian, Paralympian, and Commonwealth Games Gold Medalist, **Melissa Tapper** as our guest speaker. Milly certainly entertained and inspired us all with her story, and was very generous with her time, talking to members and posing for quite a lot of selfies.

But the star of the night was the magnificent cake made by **Andy Stewart**. It was such a sight to see that it was a pity to eat it. What am I saying? No... it was a pleasure to eat it.



## **WE GET HOW MUCH FUNDING ?!?!?**

Do you know how the federal government allocates funding to sports in Australia? If you do, could you please let me know, because I've been studying the figures and I can't make any sense out of it. Now, I know that table tennis doesn't feature highly on everyone's radar, but the list of sports and the amount of funding received by some of them is just beyond belief. I have a theory, but first, let's look at the list.



Obviously, the sports where Australia excels at **Olympic Games** are high on the list. **Swimming** receives over **\$10.5 million** of our taxpayer money each year. **Cycling** gets **\$8.8 million**, **Athletics** gets **\$8 million**, and **Hockey** gets **\$7.1 million**. But who decided that **Rowing** should be allocated **\$7.7 million** of our hard-earned? And why does **Sailing** get **\$7.4 million**, and **Equestrian** get **\$2.7 million**?

I can understand that popular sports like **Cricket** and **Rugby Union** should attract funding of around **\$2.3 million** each, but why does **Water Polo** deserve **\$2.7 million** and **Surfing** deserve **\$2 million**? **Shooting** gets **\$1.9 million**... OK, well, they've got big guns, so who'd argue with them.

You have to drop right down the list to find **Table Tennis**. An Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games sport is funded to the tune of only **\$300,000** per year. That's it. I mean, **Roller-skating** gets **\$850,000**. We are even behind **Touch Football** (**\$570,000**) and **Golf**. **Golf** gets **\$1.3 million** per year. Australia is crap at **Volleyball**, but they get over **10 times** the funding of Table Tennis.



But I said I have a theory.

I believe that table tennis is too accessible. It can be played by the masses in garages, rumpus rooms, indoors, outdoors, on wooden floors, concrete, carpet, in hot or cold weather, at any time of the day or night.

Swimming requires a big hole in the ground with lots of water. Not many people have a 400 metre running track in their backyard. You can't use a sailing boat in your spare room, and equestrian events are hard unless you have a horse.

The sports which seem to receive the most government funding are the sports which are the least accessible to the average person; dare I say, the elitist sports. I believe that table tennis is too cheap and too accessible for government funding decision-makers to take seriously.

After the 2012 Olympic Games, the **Australian Sports Commission** implemented a strategy called **Australia's Winning Edge**. This prioritised funding towards sports where it was considered that Australia had a greater chance of winning medals. Based on this, in the 4-year period from 2012 – 2016, Swimming was allocated nearly **\$34 million** in funding, Cycling was allocated **\$30 million**, Sailing **\$28 million**, and Rowing **\$29 million**. Table tennis was too far down the list to even rate a mention in the report.

Table Tennis is, in fact classified by the Australian Sports Commission as a **National** category sport. The definition for the category is a sport which *...did not medal in the past three Olympic or Paralympic Games, world championships or Commonwealth Games (gold)...* and its *... current performance indicates that these sports will require significant improvement in order to contribute to high performance targets.*

Other sports in the same category are **Artistic Swimming**, **Football (soccer)**, and **Volleyball**. Artistic Swimming's allocation of funds would be part of Swimming's \$10.5 million per annum. Football gets nearly **\$4 million** per year, and Volleyball receives a mere **\$3.2 million** per annum in funding.

So if table tennis is as bad as these sports (obviously they are not counting **Melissa Tapper's** Commonwealth Games Gold medal last year, and **Sam Von Einem's** Silver in the Rio Paralympics), then *why is our funding only \$300,000?* Surely a boost in funding is required to improve our standing to the point where we can challenge for medals.

The Winning Edge strategy was dropped in 2017 in favour of a "more balanced approach to elite sport". ASC chairman John Wylie also revealed that funding from the federal government had been slashed by 26 per cent in the past seven years.

And the good news to come out of all this? Well, there isn't any. It has now been revealed that the Federal Government is intending to cut the funding for table tennis while increasing funding for other sports in 2019.



Why am I not surprised?

The 2019 ASC funding allocation tables now show separate figures for "Participation", "High-Performance Able-bodied", and "High-Performance Para". For Table Tennis, Participation has been dropped to \$200,000. With the allocations for High Performance athletes and coaches, the total will come to \$650,000.



The Participation funding for Sailing has been set at \$650,000. The Participation funding for Equestrian has been set at \$450,000. I'm so glad. Keeping horses can be so expensive, they obviously need government support to hire staff to keep the stables clean.

Perhaps we could improve the chances of increasing funding if we started playing table tennis while wearing roller-skates and carrying shotguns.

### **NEW TTV CEO**

At the end of December, **Dennis Makaling** announced that he was resigning his position as CEO of **Table Tennis Victoria**. Dennis held the position for three and a half years and has left to pursue other ventures.

We wish Dennis all the best in his future endeavours.

The new CEO was due to commence on the 21st of January. At the time of writing, no announcement had been made on the appointment.



### **WORLD TOUR GRAND FINALS**

The top 16 players from the World Tour met in **Incheon, South Korea** last December to decide on the best of the best. And the accolades continue to fall at the feet of **Tomokazu Harimoto** who is now the youngest person to ever claim the coveted title of World Tour Men's Singles Champion. At just 15 years of age, he has beaten some of the best players in the world to take the title in a 4-1 victory of **Lin Gaoyuan** of **China**.

It was a similar score-line in the Women's final, with **Chen Meng** from **China** defeating her compatriot and surprise finalist, **He Zhuojia**.

The Men's Doubles final was taken out by the **Korean** pair of **Jang Woojin and Lim Jonghoon** who defeated **Ho Kwan Kit and Chun Ting** from **Hong Kong**.

It was victory for **Japan** in the Women's Doubles, with **Hina Hayata and Mima Ito** defeating **Chinese** rivals **Sun Yingsha and Chen Xingtong**.

In the Mixed Doubles, it was an easy victory for **Wong Chun Ting and Doo Hoi Kem** from **Hong Kong** over the combined **Korean** team of **Jang Woojin and Cha Hyo Sim**.

### **STAR AWARD WINNERS**

The **2018 ITTF Star Awards** have been handed out and the best of the best gathered in **Incheon, South Korea** for the end of year party.

**Ding Ning** once again won the popular vote for the **Female Table Tennis Star**. This is her fourth win in five years, proving her popularity with the table tennis viewing fans from around the world.

Taking his first, but probably not his last, Star Award for the **Male Table Tennis Star** was **Fan Zhendong** from **China**.

In an indication of the rise of table tennis in **India**, the **2018 Breakthrough Star** was presented to **Manika Batra**. Batra won India's first ever Commonwealth Games table tennis gold medal on the Gold Coast, and also earned medals in the Women's Team, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles events.



**Jordi Morales** from **Spain**, an unseeded player in **Class 7** at the Para World Championships, shocked everyone but himself by winning the gold medal. To cap off an amazing year, Morales was named the **2018 Male Para Star Award** winner.

**Kelly Van Zon** from **The Netherlands** had a brilliant year, winning 3 Open Championships as well as the **Class 7** Women's Para World Championship. Kelly has been the World number 1 in her class for 35 months and well deserved her **2018 Female Para Star Award**.

**Massimo Costantini** is not a name many would associate with **India**, but he is their National Coach. He took out the **2018 Star Award for Coach of the Year** for his efforts in leading the Indian team to their successes at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

The ITTF this year added 2 new awards for the **Male** and **Female Most Valuable Players**. **Fan Zhendong** took out the **Men's MVP**, while the **Female MVP** was won by **Mima Ito** of **Japan**.

## C'MON - GET HAPPY

*I recently read that someone I wrote about a few years ago has now been included in the **Jewish Sports Hall of Fame**, so I thought I'd re-publish the original article in recognition.*

Anyone who can remember watching television or listening to the radio in the early to mid-seventies has been affected by Ruth Aarons. How? We'll get to that later.

**Ruth Hughes Aarons** was born in 1918 in Connecticut, USA into a wealthy family. Her mother was an opera singer and her father was a Broadway theatrical producer and theatre owner.



Originally a tennis player, Ruth was introduced to table tennis by mere chance. At the age of 15 in the summer of 1933, Ruth was playing tennis on a roof-top court in New York. During a storm which ended the tennis match early, she went to the basement of the building where a group of people were playing table tennis. Ruth quickly became fascinated by the game. She started playing more seriously at her school and soon won her first tournament. With that victory, she was ready to compete in earnest.

Ruth joined the **Parker Brothers' American Ping-Pong Association** in 1933 and began touring the country playing tournaments, always accompanied by one of her parents.

**Sam Silberman**, her doubles partner, took to coaching Ruth. He explained, "*I came cheap. In return for being a practice partner, I used to get a sandwich served by the butler and two tickets to a Broadway show.*"

Ruth was selected to represent the U.S. at the **1936 World Championships in Prague**, and also played exhibition matches in other European cities on the tour. As conclusive proof that gender-bias was alive and well in the mid-1930's, a British reporter said of Ruth, "*Such brilliant defensive footwork by a woman player has not been seen in this country before.*"

Winning the Women's Singles at the 1936 World Championships, Ruth controversially refused to shake the hand of **Astrid Krebsbach**, her opponent from Germany, proclaiming: "*I am Jewish*".

Clearly show business was in the Aarons' blood, and so Ruth, no doubt helped by her father's connections, quickly turned her title into stage bookings at some of the most renowned theatres and exclusive supper clubs in America. These were a 15-minute exhibition act with **Michael French**, a World Doubles Champion, as her partner. As it was reported at the time, "*One of the novelties of this attraction is the way in which the latter half of the match is presented in the dark, the players being disclosed in silhouette form by means of special lighting. The ball [as well as the net] appears to be illuminated, while the players can be picked out by their white berets, white gloves, and white shoes.*"



The rules governing the sport of table tennis at the time forbade any payment being received for this type of event, and Ruth was eventually suspended by the ITTF in 1937. With the intervention of ITTF President, **Ivor Montagu**, the suspension was lifted after a month, and the exhibition matches were allowed to continue.



Ruth again represented the U.S.A. at the 1937 World Championships in **Baden, Germany**. Playing in the final against **Gertrude Pritzi** of Austria, the match was suddenly stopped because of a "game duration limit" set at 1 hour and 45 minutes. Both contestants were disqualified and the title was declared vacant. It was not until 2001, well after the deaths of both players, that they were each awarded the Gold medal for that championship.

Ruth retired from competitive play soon after the 1937 World Championships. She moved into acting and made her debut in the Warner Brothers table tennis movie short, "**Table Manners**," starring **Eddie Foy** and a supporting cast which included World Champions **Sandor Glanz** and **Laszlo Bellak**.

After the War Ruth, who'd earlier dabbled in dramatics at the **Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theater** in New York, and had also tried her hand at writing songs, now abandoned table tennis totally.

In 1966, she was inducted in the **USATT Hall of Fame** for her contributions to and success in the sport of table tennis.

On June 6, 1980, just five days before her 62nd birthday, Ruth Aarons was found dead in the shower of her Beverly Hills home, presumably after falling and hitting her head. According to a friend, her use of prescription drugs was so profound that her muscles often atrophied, which rendered her unable to leave her bed, much less to stand.

She is still the only American to have won a Singles World Championship.

And the reason people from the 70's were affected by her? After her table tennis career was over, Ruth Aarons became a theatrical manager and booking agent who looked after the careers of, among others, **Shirley Jones**, **Susan Dey**, and **David Cassidy**.

If it wasn't for Ruth Aarons, we may not have had **The Partridge Family**.



### UV ON FOR NEON PING PONG

Many of you who have watched me play may have come to the conclusion that I'm totally in the dark about table tennis. If that's true (and I have no reason to doubt it), then I think I may have found the perfect playing venue.

**Fluorocity** is a new venture in Melton offering the opportunity to play table tennis in the dark on a table illuminated by fluorescent paint under UV lighting. The effect is quite eerie and very different to the usual requirement of bright lighting for competition, but this is an experience well worth trying.



Fluorocity is at the Melton Squash Courts, on Reserve Rd, and offers squash, racketball and table tennis all in a special blacked-out area with UV lighting to illuminate the table, bats, net & ball.

You can get more information at [www.fluorocity.com.au](http://www.fluorocity.com.au). Speak to **Karen** or **Richard** to organise a great time with your family and friends. It could *almost* be the best fun you'll have in the dark.

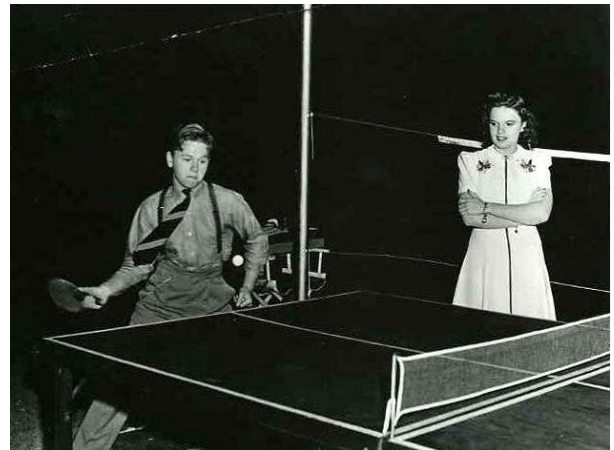
## THE STARS AT PLAY

When I first started writing this newsletter about 4 years ago, I was asked to include pictures of famous people playing table tennis. At the time, this seemed like a mammoth task, trawling through the internet looking for celebrity pictures of a particular sport.

But I finally found just what I was looking for. [www.larrytt.com/celebrities\\_playing\\_tt](http://www.larrytt.com/celebrities_playing_tt) is a webpage dedicated to photos of celebrities playing table tennis. Well, when I say “celebrities”, there’s an awful lot of people I’ve never heard of, but they may mean something to you.

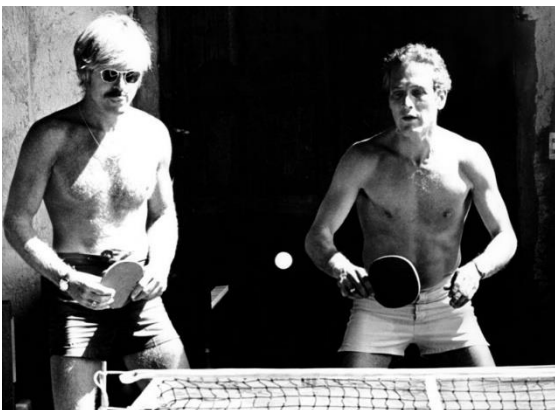
As an example of what you can find, here’s one of **Mickey Rooney** and **Judy Garland**. From the look of it, it was probably taken in the late 30’s or early 40’s (note the tie and braces).

Interesting that the net seems a lot higher than we would be used to, and I’m not sure *what* sort of a grip Mickey is using, but it shows that table tennis has been popular for a lot of years.



The website hasn’t been maintained for a long time, the look and feel are dated, and there have been no additions to it over the past year or two. In fact, Larry has put it up for grabs. He is looking for someone with an interest in it to take it over, modernise it, and start uploading new photos to it.

If you’re in the market for a fixer-upper, this could be the page for you. Let me know if you’re interested and I’ll put you in touch with Larry. Below are a couple pics more I found on this website.



**Robert Redford and Steve McQueen** during the filming of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

**Mr. Ed**, playing a forehand... no it’s a backhand... no it’s ... ummm ...



## NEW RANKING POINTS RETURN TO NORMALITY

Remember last year when the new World Ranking system kicked in with an emphasis on participation? It thrust **Dimitrij Ovtcharov (Germany)** into the number 1 spot, displacing a few of the more fancied Chinese players. Well, put away your defibrillator. Normal service has been resumed.

In the January 2019 Rankings list, Ovtcharov has dropped down to **14<sup>th</sup>** on the list. **Fan Zhendong (China)** has reclaimed his number 1 position, with **Xu Xin (China)** right behind him. 15-year-old **Tomokazu Harimoto (Japan)** continues his rise to an inevitable top spot moving from **11<sup>th</sup>** to **3<sup>rd</sup>** during 2018.

Rounding out the other top ten places are **Lin Gaoyuan (China)** 4<sup>th</sup>, **Timo Boll (Germany)** 5<sup>th</sup>, **Hugo Calderano (Brazil)** moving from **17<sup>th</sup>** to **6<sup>th</sup>**, **Lee Sangsu (Korea)** 7<sup>th</sup>, **Wong Chun Ting (Hong Kong)** 8<sup>th</sup>, **Koki Niwa (Japan)** 9<sup>th</sup>, and **Jun Mizutani (Japan)** 10<sup>th</sup>.

The biggest mover in the Men's listing was **Liu Dingshuo (China)**. Those who attended the Australian Open at Geelong last year will remember Liu getting all the way to the final where he put up a tremendous effort against Xu Xin. Partly due to that feat, Liu has jumped from **311<sup>th</sup>** to **41<sup>st</sup>** in the past 12 months.

Of the Aussie contingent, **David Powell** dropped from **119<sup>th</sup>** to **175<sup>th</sup>**, but **Heming Hu** made a giant leap for Aussie-kind, jumping from **519<sup>th</sup>** to **125<sup>th</sup>**.

The Women's list has also been re-shuffled to bring order back from chaos.. **Ding Ning (China)** had been dropped down to **21<sup>st</sup>** in the world due to missing some tournaments, but has now regained the number 1 position. **Zhu Yuling (China)** remains in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, with **Kasumi Ishikawa (Japan)** moving up a spot to 3<sup>rd</sup>. **Chen Meng (China)** relinquishes top spot and drops to 4<sup>th</sup>, while **Liu Shiwen (China)** heads back up the list moving from **21<sup>st</sup>** to **5<sup>th</sup>**.

The others in the top 10 are **Wang Manyu (China)** in 6<sup>th</sup>, **Mima Ito (Japan)** 7<sup>th</sup>, **Cheng I-Ching (Chinese Taipei)** 8<sup>th</sup>, **Miu Hirano (Japan)** 9<sup>th</sup>, and **Feng Tianwei (Singapore)** 10<sup>th</sup>.

The Aussie girls in the list saw **Jian Fang Lay** remain steady, going from **66<sup>th</sup>** to **69<sup>th</sup>**, and **Melissa Tapper** moving ahead from **195<sup>th</sup>** to **165<sup>th</sup>**. **Michelle Bromley** was the big green and gold mover, jumping from **681<sup>st</sup>** at the start of 2018, to **207<sup>th</sup>** at the start of 2019.

## FEBRUARY TOURNAMENTS

The **Australian Para Championships** will be held in **Murray Bridge, South Australia** from the **1<sup>st</sup>** to the **5<sup>th</sup>** of **February**.

On Saturday the **9<sup>th</sup>**, the **Victorian Open Senior and Para** competition will be held at the **Kilsyth Leisure Centre**.

Saturday the **23<sup>rd</sup>** will see the running of the **Ballarat Junior and Senior Open**. As is common for this event, it will be held in Ballarat.



### **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](http://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.

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.au](http://www.meltontabletennis.com.au) 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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