



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

July 2016

WINTER SEASON RESULTS, THE TRAVELS OF MATT, AND A CRACK APPEARS

In this edition, we tell you how to rack up frequent traveller points, discuss the winners and losers runners-up from the Winter season, wrap up the Aussie Open, discuss coaches and the rhythm method, and investigate a possible crack in the Great Wall of China.

WHY TRAVEL 40 KM WHEN 120 KM WILL DO ?

Have you ever wondered how long it would take to get from Melton to MSAC, back to Melton and in to MSAC again on a Saturday morning? Well, you could try it yourself, or you could ask **Matt Camilleri**.

On the morning of the Australian Open semi-finals, **Matt, Marc & Shannon** travelled to MSAC, getting there before the first match started and ready for the day's entertainment. Arriving at the ticket counter Matt reached for his wallet, only to discover that he had left it at home.

Leaving Marc and Shannon as a security deposit, Matt raced the 40 kilometres back to Melton, collected his wallet, and completed to journey back to MSAC in a time that Daniel Ricciardo would have been proud of.

WINTER SEASON RESULTS

Our winter season has concluded, and we congratulate the winners.



The **A Grade** Grand Final saw **Gavin Jackson, Marc Camilleri** and **Edward Menegol** triumph over **Chris Addis, Naim Chdid** and **Shannon Camilleri**.

B Grade had **Graham Huggett, Jim Scott** and **Joe Ciberlin** taking the chocolates over **Brian Barker, Steve Jaunkalns** and **Steve Batten** filling in for **Hayden Van Arkel**.

The battle for honours in **C1 Grade** went to **Will Corluka, Jesse Fletcher-Gass** and **Connor Ziday**, over **Jesse McKinnes, Russell Mackay** and **Callum Mawson**.

C2 Grade winners were **Peter Wlodacyzk, Anna Jurkovic** and **Anthony O'Sullivan** victorious over **Angela Cricchiola, Jason Craddock** filling in for **James Brown-Kerr**, and **Chris Ribbons** filling in for **Matthew Steane**.



Leading Players were **Matt Camilleri** in **A Grade**, **John Appleby** in **B Grade**, **Jesse McInnes** in **C1 Grade**, and **Peter Wlodacyzk** in **C2 Grade**.

AUSSIE OPEN A ROARING SUCCESS

The **Australian Open Championships** were held in Melbourne last month, and all six titles went to **Japan**. Sound boring? *Far from it*. It was one of the most amazing 5 days of table tennis imaginable, and displayed a range of talent from around the globe.

The major drawcard was world number 6, **Jun Mizutani**. Whenever he played, the grandstands were packed with people mesmerized by the speed and fluidity of his movement, and his ability to easily transition from defence to attack. The hushed crowd emphasised the precision of his contact on the ball. When serving and looping, so fine was the contact that barely a sound could be heard from the shot.



Equally impressive for me was seeing the amount of time Mizutani spent with fans well away from the main crowds of the auditorium. A large group of supporters spotted him walking through the main foyer, and Jun spent a great deal of time signing autographs and having photos taken.

Australia was represented on the final day by the Women's Doubles pairing of **Jian Fang Lay** and **Miao Miao**, who put up a brave effort but went down to the Japanese pairing of **Honoka Hashimoto** (ranked 43 in the world) and **Hitomi Sato** (ranked 21 in the world). Well out-classed by the Japanese, Lay and Miao battled bravely and represented their country well.



This event was well attended on all days, with additional seating needing to be brought in on the last day for the exciting finals.

It was also great to see the umpires umpiring, with officials both local and international calling players for illegal serves and time-wasting. During the event I saw players being called for dropping their hand too low in the service motion, not tossing high enough, and tossing the ball at an illegal angle. In all of the matches I watched, both live and on-line, I only saw one player deliberately hiding their serve and, unfortunately that was an Australian. We can only hope that this problem is corrected quickly.

After the 2014 Aussie Open, I told you to watch out for **Mima Ito**, who is now ranked 10th in the world. After the 2015 Aussie Open, I told you to watch out for **Miu Hirano**, who is now ranked 11th in the world. So my one to watch from this year's tournament? I'll give you three.

From Europe, watch out for Frenchman **Romain Ruiz**. Currently ranked 263 in the Men's and 69 in the Under 21's, this 19-year-old blond 6-footer plays an attacking game and gets to shots that would be out of reach for many.

From Asia, keep your eye on 15-year-old **Lin Yun-Ju** from Chinese Taipei. He was able to match it with competitors who had much more experience and seems composed and confident at the table.



From Australia, it's worth watching **Jiaming (Jasmine) Chao**. At just 18, Jasmine plays a fascinating combination of chopping defence which she uses to set up stunningly quick attack. She's still well down the rankings, but not for long.

To all involved at Table Tennis Australia, Table Tennis Victoria, and HWATT, I say well done on a tournament of which we can all be proud.

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

The annual **3 weeks of Club Championships** is upon us. This is always a fun time of the year and there are some great trophies on offer.

Week 1 on the **14th of July** is the **Singles Club Championship**. Divided into 3 groups, (A Grade, B Grade and C Grade), it starts as a round-robin contest before progressing to a knockout phase.

Week 2 on the **21st of July** is the **Handicap Championship**. Every player has a chance of winning this, regardless of your standing in the club. Each player is given a handicap ranking and matches are played up to **31 points**. Some top players may start on **0** or even a *negative points score*, while the lower rated players may start on up to **25** points. It's fun to watch the top players sweating in these games, as they can't afford to make a mistake.

In **Week 3**, on the **28th of July**, we run the **Doubles Championship** and the **Shootout**. Doubles partnerships are paired on the night, with the lowest ranked player being teamed up with the highest ranked, and so on for other players. This gives everyone an even chance of winning the award. The **Shootout** is a quick-fire knockout competition of the first player to three points. 2 players go in.... only 1 comes out.

The Club Championships are open to **all MTTA members** who have played at least 3 rounds in the grade and have paid all appropriate fees. All players are given the best opportunity to take out one of the 10 awards on offer. Don't miss this chance to stretch your abilities and have some fun.

COACHES HAVE NO RHYTHM

Have you ever watched a top line table tennis match, either live or on TV? If you have, you've probably noticed the same thing that I have.

Table tennis coaches can't seem to clap in time with the rest of the crowd. They always seem to find some reason to applaud even when the masses in the grandstand have gone quiet. Sometimes they even start to applaud all on their own, leaving the crowds wondering what just happened.

I'm not sure what causes this, but not being sure has never stopped me from espousing wild, unsubstantiated theories in the past, so here I go again.

Could it be that, when receiving their coaching qualifications they undergo a "rhythm-bypass"? I've never seen a national coach "bust a move" when the music comes on between games. Or maybe when growing up, all future coaches are forced to listen to jazz-fusion records, leaving them totally unsure of what beat to clap on.



It's like when you go to a comedy club and there's that one audience member who can't laugh at the same time everyone else does.

Is there a solution? I don't know. Surely this is something that requires government-funded research to find the answer. Without this assistance, we may be left with a generation of former coaches who can only embarrass their relatives by dancing at weddings like your elderly uncle Harold.... and no-one wants to see that.

A CRACK IN THE WALL ?

Do I detect a small crack in the Great Wall of China? Is the influence of the greatest table tennis nation in the world starting to slip? Well, not in the short term, but the balance of power may be starting to tilt away from Beijing.

Looking through the list of players on the **ITTF World Rankings**, most people don't venture past the top ten. Luckily for you, dear readers, I am not "most people". It is possible to investigate the details of Senior players, Under 21, Under 18 and Under 15 rankings for Men & Women. And the details show a startling pattern.

There are **1,297** players listed in the Senior Men's rankings, and as we all know **China** has players ranked at numbers **1, 2, 3, & 4**. Very impressive. But the only other players China has in that list are at positions **11, 191, 542, and 552**. China, the greatest power in table tennis over the past 40 years has only **8** players out of nearly 1,300 in the Senior Men's rankings. And the participation is on the decline. In the same rankings in 2014, China had 25 players listed. *That's a 68% drop in 2 years.*

By comparison, **Japan** and **Russia** both have **36** players in this list, **Egypt** has **28**, **Germany** has **27**, **Korea** has **21** and **Australia** has **12**. Yep, that's right. Australia has more players in the Senior Men's rankings than China.

So it gets better for China in the Under 21's, doesn't it? They have the number **1** there as well. They also have the numbers **37, 209, & 215**. That's it. *4 players out of 637*. And the comparisons? **France** has **29**, **Japan** has **27**, **Egypt** **23**, **Russia** **22**, **Germany** **18**, **Korea** **17**, and **Australia** has **7**. Again, Australia has more players in the list than China.

Under 18's? Here's where things get diabolical. China has only 2 players, and they are ranked **103 & 108**. And that's out of the *474 listed players*. That's all they have. Just the 2 players. **France** has **20**, **Japan** and **Egypt** have **18**, **Russia** **17**, **Germany** **15**, and **Australia** has **6**.

So their youth must be hiding in the Under 15 Boy's then, right? *Wrong*. There are *no Chinese* listed in the **148** players in that age group.

Therefore, obviously the strength of the Chinese is in the Women's ranking. Well, let's look.

China has **7 players** in the Senior Women's ranking of *808 players*. But they have the numbers **1, 2, 3, 5, and 8** in the top 10. **Egypt** has **34** players, **Japan** **33**, **France** **31**, **Russia** **28**, **Germany** **25**, and **Australia** has **15**. 2 years ago, China had 21 Senior players in this list. This is a *66% decrease*. Almost identical to the Men's.

In the Under 21's, the Chinese Women still have the number **1** spot, with only 2 other players in the list, and they are ranked at **278 & 509**. Just *3 players out of 541*. **Egypt** has **30**, **France** has **26**, **Germany** has **17** and **Russia** has **15**.

The Under 18's ranking is worse. *Far worse*. There is only 2 Chinese woman listed, at numbers 184 and 391. Out of *421 players*, China only has 2 player listed. **Egypt** has **27** players, **France** has **23**, **Japan** has **17** including the numbers **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 10**. **Russia** has **11**. Even **Australia** has **6** players in this list.

And the drought continues for the most populous nation on earth, with *only 2 players* listed in the 145 on the Under 15 Girl's ranking. By comparison, **Egypt has 14, France has 9, Russia and Germany have 7 each, and Japan has 5.**

So where are the Chinese junior players? Are they being developed away from the prying eyes of the table tennis world, or do they simply not exist? We know that table tennis is their national sport, and that they have extremely strong internal competitions and training facilities, but surely they would want to test their younger players against the best the world has to offer.

In his excellent book, ***Ping Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History Behind the Game That Changed the World***, **Nicholas Griffin** makes the point that *"If you're young and Chinese, you're wearing a Houston Rockets shirt and bouncing a basketball on Beijing asphalt, or you're wearing a Manchester United kit, sprinting after a dusty ball and dreaming of a greener field. Table tennis is a game your dad plays."*

So if the youth of China are falling out of love with their national sport, who will take their mantle as the top table tennis nation? Japan is the obvious answer. But they may not have it all their own way.

If you look at the list of participating countries in all the age groups, a few names keep cropping up. France, Russia and Egypt are all listed as having a large number of participants in each of the age groups for both men and women. Admittedly, their players all appear down the listing, but they're there, Will they have a world champion within the next few years? I doubt it. But if you have a large number of participants the chances are you will find a diamond in a mountain of coal.

JULY TOURNAMENTS

There are really only 2 tournaments that are of interest to us this month, but they will both be of high quality.

On the **17th**, MSAC will be the venue for the **2016 Victorian Open Veterans Championship**.

A week later, on the **24th**, MSAC will also see the running of the **2016 Victorian Open Senior and Para Championships**. With representatives of both the Olympic and Paralympic teams being Victorians, the fields for these events will be packed with talent, and this should attract top players from interstate as well.

HARIMOTO MOTORS ON

The winner of an Under 21 Open event overseas is not something that I would usually report on. However when it makes table tennis history, I'll make an exception.

The **Under 21 Boys** championship at the Japan Open went to **Tomokazu Harimoto** who is just **12 years old**. This makes him the youngest winner of an Under 21 Boys Open, smashing the previous record of 15 years old set by **Koki Niwa** of Japan.

With his head screwed on right, Harimoto is viewing this as just another step on his journey, with his ultimate goal of being the Olympic champion at the **2020 Tokyo Olympic Games**. He will be 16 when those games are held. What then? Retirement?

ON THE WEB

Every now and again, it's worth reminding ourselves of the great resource provided to us by the world governing body of our sport. www.ittf.com contains an incredible amount of information on all things related to table tennis.

The main tab has the latest news feeds from all tournaments around the world. You can also access player rankings and individual tournament information from the tabs across the top of this screen. There are also links to Para table tennis pages from these tabs as well.

The asset most used from the ITTF page is the ITTV section. This allows you to live stream current events from around the world, as well as allowing you to watch replays of major matches from recent ITTF events. It's amazing how much you can learn by watching the top players from around the world.

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