



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

July 2017

Edition 36

SEEKING SIZZLE SERVICE, STANDINGS STUDIED, GOLD COAST CUP HOST, & WIMBLEDON WINNERS

In this edition, we seek more help for another fund-raiser, discuss Australia's place in the world of table tennis, talk about some amazing upcoming events, and look at a couple of cross-over champions.

SHIVERS AT SAUSAGE SIZZLE

Recently MTTA ran a sausage sizzle at **Coles Supermarket** in Melton South. On what turned out to be the coldest day so far this year, with the mercury struggling to climb to 12°C (54°F), a hardy and slightly shivering group of volunteers stood close to the grill but still managed to smile. Although profit on the day was slim, we talked to many people who showed interest in our sport, including a couple of seventy-something ladies who still play twice a week. Thanks go to those who braved the elements on the day; **Chris Blake, Geof Walker, Dean Camilleri, Larry Hallinan** and **Glenn O'Dea**.

MTTA have been lucky enough to secure another weekend at **Coles** Melton South on the **29th** and **30th** of **July**. We will again be seeking help from members to assist with our efforts from **10:00am** until **2:00pm** on each day. As well as raising money for the club, we will be handing out flyers promoting our club and our sport. If you can assist on either day, please notify one of the committee.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Now, I don't like to blow my own trumpet, but if I don't, who will?

You may remember in the last edition of *Across The Net*, I complained that the ITTF was neglecting the table tennis players of the Southern Hemisphere by not allocating World Championship events to be played down here. Well, someone must have been reading, because just **3 days later**, the ITTF announced that the **2018 World Junior Championships** will be held right here in Victoria.

To be played in **Bendigo**, the event is scheduled for **December 2nd** to **9th** at the re-furbished **Bendigo Stadium**. Some of the best *Under-18 players* in the world will be attending, so this should be a trip well worth making. And it's the first step to getting the Men's and Women's World Championships Down Under.

It has been suggested by the ITTF that the awarding of the championships was scheduled as part of the *2017-2020 ITTF-Oceania Strategic Plan* to assist in the commercial growth and popularity of the sport in our region, but we know better, don't we.

You can thank me later.

NO SUCCESS IN BENDIGO, BUT LOTS OF FUN

On the Queen's Birthday long weekend, **3** teams from Melton travelled to Eaglehawk to compete in the **Teams Championship**. Played at the Bendigo and Districts Table Tennis Club in Eaglehawk, and at the adjoining Badminton centre, this 3-day event comprised 102 teams from 18 country associations throughout the state; a total of 327 players competing on 49 tables.



Our teams of **Graham Huggett, Jim Scott** and **Steve Jaunkalns** competing in **E2**, **Geof Walker, Brett Woods**, and **Sarah Lappin** in **E4**, and **Annemarie Rothwell, Sharyn Ciberlin** and **Ross Lappin** in **E5**, represented MTTA in a manner of which we can all be proud.

Seen pictured here at one of their rigorous training sessions, our teams didn't bring home any trophies, but did their best to enjoy themselves and support at least one local business during the long weekend.

MIXING IT UP IN TOKYO

It has now been confirmed that there will be a **Mixed Doubles** competition at the **2020 Tokyo Olympics**, joining Men's and Women's Singles, and the Men's and Women's Teams events. This has been an initiative of ITTF President, **Thomas Weikert** who, in 2015 paid a visit to the president of the *Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Organising Committee*, **Yoshiro Mori** to request that a *Mixed Doubles* competition be added to the calendar of events for their Games.

This request has now been granted, and the players will have an extra opportunity to perform on the world's largest sporting stage.

A TOAST TO LEFTHANDEDNESS

Have I mentioned before that left-handers are taking over the world? I think I have. But just in case any right-handers out there are in any doubt and are considering not bowing down before us, let me state the facts again.

Despite the obstacles thrown at us (can openers, scissors, etc), many left-handers have achieved great power. **Aristotle, Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, Leonardo Da Vinci, Toulouse Lautrec, Charlie Chaplin, Marilyn Monroe, Lewis Carroll, Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Winston Churchill, David Bowie, Jimi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain, Jack the Ripper, Chewbacca the Wookiee, Bart Simpson...** well, you get the idea.

And in table tennis it's happening as well. Particularly in doubles. Of the last **16** pairs in the Men's Doubles at the recent **Japan Open**, **15 pairings** were a combination of a left-hander and a right-hander. And the **16th** pairing? **2 left-handers**. I'm available as a doubles partner if anyone is interested.

WHERE WE STAND

Have you ever wondered how good Australia's top players are compared to the rest of the world? It's always been difficult to estimate, but now with the help of a website called tabletennis.guide, it's a bit easier.

Looking at players with rankings in the ITTF standings, they have analysed the ratings points for each player, grouped them, and then ranked the countries. As a further guide, they have also averaged the top three players from each country and ranked those as well. The results down the list are interesting, but let's look at the top countries in the Men's first.

As you would expect, **China** leads the way. Their **Top 3** players have an average rating of **3231**, miles ahead of **Germany** whose Top 3 players average **2665** points. **Japan** is just behind with their Top 3 averaging **2660**. **South Korea, Hong Kong, Portugal, Sweden, France, Taiwan** and **Austria** round out the top 10 countries.

Australia is in **46th** place. Our Top 3 players average **1396** points. We're fast approaching **Latvia, Chile** and **Qatar**, but we are already ahead of **Lithuania**. *Yes!!! In your face, Vilnius.*

And what of countries we compare ourselves against in other areas? **England** is in a very respectable **13th** position, **Canada** is in **55th**, just ahead of the **USA** in **56th**. Others from our region include **Vanuatu** in **74th** position, **New Caledonia** in **87th** and **New Zealand** in **93rd**.

As big a gap as there is between China and the rest, it becomes more obvious when you look at the average of all ITTF ranked players from the country. In the Men's listing, China's Top 3 average 3231, but the average of all of their ranked players is **2737**, while the average of all ranked German players is **1692**. Wow. That's quite a difference. The average for all ranked Australian players is **932**, showing the huge gap in overall talent between us and the top nations. On the average of all ranked players, Australia drops to **70th**. We are well behind **Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan & Turkmenistan**. Hell, we're even behind **Luxembourg**, a country so small that you need to carry your passport when at the table in case you get pushed back to play a lob.

So what of the Women? Well, **China** are on top again, but the chasers are much closer. China's **Top 3** players have an average rating of **3288**, not that far ahead of **Japan** on **3003**. **Singapore** is a very creditable third with an average of **2906**, followed by **Germany, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Romania, Monaco**, and **North Korea** charging up like an intercontinental..... umm, charging up very fast.

Australia is in **40th** position with our Top 3 averaging **1738**. We are just behind **Egypt** who are in **39th**, and we are being pushed from behind by the **Greeks**.

England are not as powerful in the Women's competition, coming in at **28th**, **Canada** are in **47th** and the **USA** are in **49th**. From the **Oceania** region, **New Zealand** are in **74th** position, **Fiji** are **83rd**, and **New Caledonia** are **84th**.

When ranked by all players, there's an interesting surprise. China are still on top with an average of **2792**, but **Monaco** is ranked second with **2593**. The reason for this is that Monaco has only one player in the ITTF rankings, and she's very good.

Regular readers will remember that last year I made an offer of travelling to Monaco and finding out why they had only one player at that level. All you had to do was to raise the relevant funding for my trip (business class), with a little extra spending money for the casino. That offer still stands.

But moving on, **Japan** have an average of **2414**, and the **North Koreans** are poised to launch with an average of **2359**. **Australia** drop to **69th** on this list with an average of **999**, sandwiched between **Turkmenistan** and **Pakistan** (numerically, not geographically).

While Australia dominate our region, there is still much room for improvement before we can match it with the big guns of the sport. But as baseball coach, **Terry Bradshaw** said, *“When you’ve got something to prove, there’s nothing greater than a challenge.”*

GOLD ON THE GOLD COAST

Starting on **Sunday the 2nd of July** and running until **Friday the 7th**, the brand-new **Gold Coast Sports and Leisure Centre** on the Gold Coast in Queensland will be hosting some of the best players in the world. The **2017 ITTF World Cup Platinum** event will be staged at the same venue that will be hosting Commonwealth Games events in April next year.

Part of the 12-city **ITTF World Tour**, the Gold Coast event will be watched by table tennis lovers from around the globe on the ITTV web channel. And being one of the six *“Platinum”* events in the series which earn the players bonus points, we were assured of attracting the best players.

And haven’t we. Entrants in the Men’s events include the World numbers **2, 3, 4, 6, 9 & 10**. We will have the opportunity to see **Fan Zhendong, Xu Xin, Zhang Jike, Jun Mizutani, Fang Bo, Vladimir Samsonov, Tomokazu Harimoto** and many others competing right before our eyes.

On the Women’s side, entrants include the World numbers **3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 10**. **Zhu Yuling, Feng Tienwei, Chen Meng, Kasumi Ishikawa, Cheng I-Ching, Miu Hirano and Mima Ito** will be there.

The oldest player at the event? **Jian Fang Lay** will hold that honour. **44** and still going strong. Next oldest at the event will be **41-year-old Vladimir Samsonov**. Youngest? A much closer race, but Australian **Danni-Elle Townsend** will be celebrating her **14th** birthday on the first day of competition. Let’s hope she get a nice birthday present.

6 of the **top 10**, and **22** of the **top 50** men’s players in the world, together with **7** of the **top 10**, and **24** of the **top 50** women in the world. What a fantastic boost to table tennis in Australia.

And the great news is that the Gold Coast will also be hosting the **2018 ITTF World Cup** event in November next year. It’ll be worth taking some time off for that one.

World Cup 2017, the 2018 Commonwealth Games, and World Cup 2018. Three great reasons to go to the Gold Coast.

Schoolies. One great reason to avoid the Gold Coast.

OUR LINKS WITH WIMBLEDON

It's hard to disassociate table tennis from its big brother. From its very inception, table tennis was designed as an indoor version of lawn tennis and it took a very long time to develop its own set of rules. In fact, until 1928 table tennis even shared its scoring system with lawn tennis.

In the very early forms of the game, table tennis was designed to even resemble the outdoor variety, as can be seen from this early packaged set which came complete with the same line markings and stadium walls. The netting was an added extra to help prevent damage to the expensive crockery on the side-tables, and the picture of a grandstand full of spectators was designed to give the game some atmosphere.



Because we shared so much of a history in design and rules, you could easily imagine that we would share players as well. And you'd be right, at least in the early years. Many table tennis players proudly state that they started on the big court before moving to the indoor game. U.S. star of the 1930's, **Ruth Aarons** was one of these, but she had never won any major titles in tennis before making the switch.

In reality, only **2** players have ever had great success at both games, and they were both English. When I say success, I am referring to **World Championship** medals in table tennis, and to one of the 4 majors in tennis (**Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon, and the U.S. Open**).

Ann Haydon was one of the unluckiest table tennis players of her era. She reached *five* World Championship finals and lost them all. Although that sounds more like bad play than bad luck, it should be considered that she was only **15** when she lost in the final of the **Women's Doubles** in **1954** and took the *Silver* medal. In **1956** Ann won a *Bronze* in **Women's Doubles** and a *Silver* in **Mixed Doubles**, but the story gets really interesting in **1957**.



Competing in the finals of the **Women's Singles, Women's Doubles** and **Mixed Doubles**, Ann had to play all finals on the same day as going through *five qualifying rounds* for the **Mixed Doubles** in the morning. She came close to winning all three titles (every match went to five games) but ended up with silver in each. The **Singles** final was as close as it could have been. Against **Fujie Eguchi** of **Japan**, Ann lost the second game 24-22 to go two-nil down, won the third and fourth 21-19 and 23-21, then lost the final game 19-21.

With the world-class doubles specialist **Diane Rowe**, Ann lost the **Women's Doubles** title in five games. Playing with Czechoslovakia's **Ivan Andreadis** in the **Mixed Doubles**, Ann again went down in a thriller, the pair losing 21-19 in the fifth.

Interestingly, Ann was the daughter of **Adrian Haydon** who played at World Championships from **1929** to **1953** but never won a Gold. Adrian won **2 Bronze** in Singles, **2 Silver** and **3 Bronze** in Men's Doubles, and **1 Bronze** in Mixed Doubles. It seems the Gold aversion ran in the family.

Switching to tennis, Ann showed her versatility on grass and clay, winning the **Singles** in **1961**, **Women's Doubles** in **1963**, **Singles** in **1966**, and **Women's Doubles** in **1968**, all at the **French Open**.

In **1969** Ann won the **Singles** title at **Wimbledon**, **Women's Doubles** at the **French Open**, and **Mixed Doubles** at the **Australian Open**.



Before we move on to the other cross-over champion, I'd like to get one thing straight. The tennis player, **Andy Murray** is a **Scot**. He is *not* English. He may be *British*, but he is certainly not English.

Having settled that small point, **Fred Perry** is still the last *Englishman* to win the Men's All-England Tennis Championship at **Wimbledon**.



Fred Perry came from a relatively poor working-class family and rose to be one of the world's great tennis players when the sport was dominated by the rich and well-to-do. What most people don't know is that before Perry won his Wimbledon titles, he had already won a **Gold**, a **Silver** and **4 Bronze** medals at two consecutive *World Table Tennis Championships*.

In the **1928** Championships held in **Stockholm, Sweden**, he won *Silver* in the **Men's Doubles**, *Bronze* in the **Mixed Doubles**, and *Bronze* in the **Men's Team** event. In the **1929** Championships in **Budapest, Hungary**, Fred won the *Gold* in the **Men's Singles**, *Bronze* in the **Men's Doubles**, and *Bronze* in the **Men's Team** event.

Giving up table tennis and returning to his sport of preference, Fred won **Mixed Doubles** at both the **French Open** and the **U.S. Open** in **1932**. In **1933** Fred won the **U.S. Open Singles** title, and the **Men's Doubles** at the **French Open**. **1934** was a great year for Fred, winning **Singles** at **Wimbledon** and the **U.S. Open**, and **Men's Doubles** at the **Australian Open**.



In **1935** he took out **Singles** titles at the **French Open** and **Wimbledon**, as well as the **Mixed Doubles** at **Wimbledon**. **1936** was the last year Fred won any of the majors, taking the **U.S. Open** and **Wimbledon Singles** titles as well as the **Mixed Doubles** at **Wimbledon**.

In a sad coincidence. Fred Perry passed away in Melbourne while attending the Australian Open in **1995**.

With both tennis and table tennis being such specialized sports, it would be hard to think that anyone could be a world-beating champion in both again, but we live in hope.

COACHING MOVES

The head coach of a sporting team plays a crucial role in the organisation. They provide leadership and support to the athletes as well as overseeing the individual's progress towards optimum performance. Without a respected head coach, structures within a sporting group can start to break down. Imagine **Collingwood** without **Nathan Buckley**..... OK, probably not the best example, but you get the idea.

Or maybe try to imagine if the very successful coach of the best table tennis team in the world was given a "promotion" and removed from the coaching role just before that country hosted their Open Championship. That's exactly what has happened to **Liu Guoliang**, chief coach of the Chinese National team, who has been named Vice President of the Chinese Table Tennis Association in a move that will see him no longer the chief coach of the team.

In a complete reform of the current coaching structure, the chief coach and head coach positions of the men's and women's teams will no longer exist. The new structure will see the formation of two coaching teams that will be responsible for the men's and women's national squads.

All of this was announced just 2 *days* before the **2017 China Open**, being played in Chengdu. And exactly what was the reaction of the players? As close as a Chinese national team could come to mutiny. On the second day of the tournament, all members of the Men's team posted on social media, "*At this moment we have no desire to fight.....all because we miss you Liu Guoliang!*"

World number 4, **Zhang Jike** withdrew due to an injury, although no injury has officially been reported. **Ma Long**, **Xu Xin** and **Fan Zhendong**, the World numbers 1, 2, & 3, all failed to appear for their Round of 16 matches and were disqualified.

No action appears to have been taken by the Women's team, although it was the removal of their coach which started the whole debacle. Coach **Kong Linghui** was suspended from duties due to his involvement in a lawsuit, which caused the Chinese Table Tennis Association to review all coaches and coaching structures.

The ITTF have requested a detailed report from the CTTA and have stated that, "*...all potential sanctions are on the table.*"

Three of the four players involved are due to participate in the **2017 World Cup** event on the **Gold Coast** at the start of July. It will be interesting to see if any or all of them arrive.

JULY TOURNAMENTS

As discussed earlier, from the **2nd** to the **7th** of July, some of the best players in the world will be descending on the Gold Coast for the **ITTF World Tour Australian Open**. This is a rare opportunity to see some of the top players competing against each other on our own soil. If you can't make it there, you will be able to watch live streaming at <https://tv.ittf.com>

Locally, **Saturday the 15th** is the **Victorian Open Veterans Championship** at **MSAC** followed a week later on **Saturday the 22nd** with the **Victorian Open Senior and Para Championships**, also at **MSAC**.

ON THE WEB

It's been a while since I mentioned this one, but if you're not visiting www.tabletenniscoaching.com on a regular basis, you're really missing out on a lot.

Larry Hodges is a coach at the **Maryland Table Tennis Center** in the U.S., as well as a board member of the **USATT**. He writes a daily blog concerning all things table tennis. And don't let the "table tennis coaching" title fool you into thinking this won't be relevant to you. There are links to heaps of other websites, articles and video's to view, and new one's appearing every day.

It's well worth a regular visit.

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