



# **ACROSS THE NET**

## **Melton Table Tennis**

June 2017

Edition 35

### **SEASON ON, SAUSAGES SIZZLING, PARA WRAP, AND THE HIGH HORSE HAS BOLTED**

In this edition we seek support for a sausage sizzle, talk about our Winter season, wrap-up the Para World Championships, discuss the ITTF Presidential election, I take off on my high-horse about the great divide, and then I divide opinion.

### **WINTER IS COMING**

Our Winter season has started and, although it's early the competition looks even. With **Matt Camilleri** on his "grand tour" of Europe and Canada for the next few months, the way has been cleared for others to challenge, winnings *Games* for the *Throne* of Leading Player.

New players in **B-Grade** and **C-Grade** will make the competitions interesting, and will push participants to the pinnacle.

Don't forget that with Matt's absence for this season, **Chris Blake** will be filling the role of **Player Liaison**. If you can't make it, or if you are running late, contact Chris on **0438 058 779** to organise a fill-in. Don't call Matt. He won't care.

And remember that teams and fixtures are available on our website. We wish everyone the best of luck for the season.

### **"FRENCH BOY" GONE**



After a couple of very successful seasons with us, **Paul Denis** is gone. Paul has completed his year as an exchange student in Melton and has returned to France and his home club in **Rennes**.

Paul managed to win the A-Grade Leading Player award in our final season last year, ending **Matt Camilleri's** run of 5 straight awards.

His cheery demeanour and cheeky grin will be missed, and we wish him every success with his future.

Let's hope he mentions us in his victory speech when he wins the European Championship.



### COLES SAUSAGE SIZZLE

The new **Coles Supermarket** in **Melton South** is now providing barbeque facilities for local sporting and community-based groups to run sausage sizzles for fund-raising.

MTTA will be running sausage sizzles at the entrance to Coles Supermarket on the weekend of the **24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of June** from **10:00am to 2:00pm** on both days. We will be handing out flyers promoting our sport and our club, and encouraging people to come along and try it out. We also have more weekends booked for later in the year and will pass on details closer to these dates.

If you are available to assist on either day of that weekend, please let one of the committee members know.

### AUSSIES AT THE WORLD PARA TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS

Played in **Bratislava, Slovakia**, the **World Para Teams Championships** were held during May. Australia was represented by **Sam Von Einem & Rory Carroll** in Class 11, **Barak Mizrachi & Nathan Pellissier** in Class 8 with **Trevor Hirth** acting as reserve (possibly the first time Trevor has ever acted reserved).



Four nations competed in the Men's Class 11. Sam & Rory started their campaign with a 3-0 victory over the **Japanese** team, but then unfortunately lost their remaining matches to **France** and **Hong Kong**, the teams who took the Gold & Silver medals.

The battle for Class 8 comprised 11 nations. Barak and Nathan put in their best effort, playing against **Great Britain, Chinese Taipei, Japan**, and eventual Gold medalists **Sweden**, but were unsuccessful in progressing to the medal matches.



Trevor didn't make the table in a match, but was there, assisting as a training partner, supporting his teammates, and looking debonair as usual.



Photos courtesy of ITTF.

### WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS ON

The **Leibherr 2017 World Championships** are currently being played in **Dusseldorf, Germany**, and will continue until the **5<sup>th</sup> of June**. With the best of the best in the world on show, the matches so far have been spectacular.

Australia is there, represented by **David Powell, Kane Townsend** and **Heming Hu** in the Men's, and **Jian Fang Lay** and **Sarah Tan** in the Women's. While Sarah didn't make it out of the Qualification Rounds, all others got through to the Main Draw. At the time of publication, other matches are continuing.

Remember, you can go to [www.ittv.com](http://www.ittv.com) where you can stream live matches or select from a range of games to replay.

## NEW ITTF PRESIDENT

At the Annual General Meeting of the ITTF held in conjunction with the World Championships, the presidential elections were conducted and **Thomas Weikert** emerged victorious, continuing his role as the seventh person to be president of the ITTF.



In what became a two-horse race when **Khalil Al Mohannadi** withdrew his candidacy for president to run for the role of vice-president, Weikert was elected by a margin of 119 to 90 over Jean-Michael Saive, with a platform of making a greater effort to market table tennis, and to develop the sport in “small” nations.

With his former roles in German and European table tennis administration, and having already completed a term as president, Weikert should be able to push through his initiatives.

We wish him luck and look forward to seeing his vision implemented.

## PROPOSED RULE CHANGES

I’ve just been reading through the agenda for the **ITTF Annual General Meeting** which was held in conjunction with the World Championships (the things I go through for you), and I found a couple of disturbing proposals.

Both the **Hong Kong** and the **Korean Table Tennis Associations** have proposed that the rule requiring that at least **85%** of the thickness of the blade is made of wood be abolished and any material be allowed. Their reasoning for this is that it would allow for more innovation, and would drive down racket prices. *Really? Drive down prices?* Do they *really* think that rackets made entirely of **Kevlar**, **carbon fibre**, or **titanium** would be cheaper than wood? They also argue that materials like **boron** are organic. Yeah. Not like that horrible wood stuff we’ve been using up until now.

But one of the other proposals has completely floored me. It has been proposed that rule **2.6.5** which states that, in the serving motion, the free arm needs to be removed from the space between the ball and the net be deleted. This is one of the basic rules of serving designed to stop the server from blocking the receiver’s vision of the contact point. And a proposal has been made to remove the rule, which would allow more cheating by the server. *Are you kidding me?* This rule was implemented in 2005 to stop the server from hiding the service contact in order to gain an illegal advantage. *And now they want to abolish it?*

But it gets worse. Do you know who proposed that the rule be rescinded? The **ITTF Rules and Referees Committee**, that’s who. And the logic for the proposal? It causes confusion. Well, ref, if it causes you confusion, then you cannot be sure that the serve is legal. If you cannot be sure that the serve is legal, all you have to do is invoke rule **2.6.6** which says, *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.*

End of rant.

## **HOLTZ MOVES ON FROM SMASHING BARRIERS**

**Christian Holtz** has been used to pushing himself hard to improve the life of others. Since 2014, Christian has been heading up the **ITTF-Oceania's Smash Down Barriers** program. Smash Down Barriers aims to use table tennis as a tool to improve the lives of people with disabilities living in Oceania and southeast Asia. The program is currently running in **Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu** in the Pacific, and **Thailand and Indonesia** in Southeast Asia.



But now Christian will be moving to the role of **Executive Director of ITTF-Oceania**. His role will focus on implementing ITTF-Oceania's new strategic plan for 2017-2020. This plan will be to further develop and commercialise the sport within the Oceania region, with the vision of inspiring excellence in life through table tennis. The efforts will be focused around developing the five pillars of participation, high performance, events, operations, and communications.

The appointment of Christian as Executive Director is the first step in implementing the strategic investment made by ITTF earlier in the year, which will see an investment of significant financial and human resources into the region to assist its commercial growth, and the popularity of the sport.

*"I am very excited to take on this challenge, especially at such a crucial time for ITTF-Oceania as we implement the 2017-2020 ITTF-Oceania Strategic Plan."* said Christian.

All at MTTA thank Christian for his work with Smash Down Barriers and wish him every success in his new role.

## **ULTIMATE LEAGUE**

A new league has been announced and is recruiting players. In a similar fashion to the IPL in cricket, **India** are innovating and pushing boundaries in an effort to drive our sport into the foreground on the sub-continent.

A company called **11Even Sports** has been established in **Mumbai, India**, and has entered into a 10-year agreement with the **Table Tennis Federation of India** to promote and develop the game in that country. They have announced that the **Ultimate Ping Pong Championship** will be played in Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai over 18 days in July. Limited to 48 players (24 Indian and the rest from abroad), the prize-money of **US\$450,000** is designed to attract some of the best in the world.

Comprising six teams of eight, the rules state that each team must include an equal number of male and female players, and must contain at least one under-21 year-old player.

Chairperson of 11Even Sport, **Vita Dani** said, *"Through Ultimate Ping Pong Championship, we are embarking on an exciting journey of transforming table tennis from being largely a recreational activity in India to a mainstream sport."*

This is a great initiative and we hope it proves to be a huge success.

## THE DIVIDING LINE

I come to you today to plead for the rights of a forgotten minority. Long overlooked, these people should have the same rights as the large majority who have had it so good for so long. In a sad case of “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” it has been too easy for the powers-that-be to pretend that this minority group, this small number of dedicated individuals, are somehow less entitled than the majority.

I am speaking, of course, about the table tennis players of the Southern Hemisphere.

Yes, we may be small in number, and no, we may not have the champions who can compete with those of the Northern Hemisphere, but does that mean that we should be denied the privilege of hosting world championship table tennis events? Are the ITTF or the top players fearful of sliding off the planet if they venture past the equator? I can assure them that gravity sucks down here as well.



Don't believe that we have been overlooked? Read on, dear friends. Read on.

**88%** of the world's population live above the equator. The powerhouse table tennis nations are all up there. And not just the Asian countries. Table tennis is immensely popular in Europe as well. But that doesn't mean that it's not played down south. Of the **226 federations** that make up the ITTF, **76** are totally or partially in the Southern Hemisphere. While making up only about **10%** of the total number of players registered with the ITTF, it is still a significant number of federations who are part of the global family, although at times we feel like second-cousins-twice-removed.

There have been **62** table tennis World Championships, either individual, teams, or combined. And how many have been played in the Southern Hemisphere? **None**. Now, I'm not that good at maths, but to my way of thinking, 10% of 62 would suggest that at least a couple of world championships should have been played somewhere on the southern side of the planet.

Yes, I know that the argument will come that you play these events in the heartland of the sport because that's where the fans are, but that's exactly the inward-looking philosophy that stifles growth. If you want to grow the sport, you have to get out to where the expansion can happen. You could argue that this would prevent many fans in the Northern Hemisphere from attending the championships. **HELLO!!!** Guess what's been happening to fans down here for decades. And have they not discovered the internet yet? That's what we've had to use to watch all of the championships being played up there.

Could they argue that we couldn't put on the championships properly? Well, speaking for Australia, could I direct your attention to **2 Olympic Games**, **4 Commonwealth Games**, and successfully hosting world championships in **cricket, hockey, rugby**, and many other sports. Earlier this year Melbourne even hosted the **Dodgeball** World Championships (yes, it is a real sport), and other Southern Hemisphere countries have hosted Commonwealth Games as well as other world championship events very successfully. And let's not forget the **Rio Olympics**..... OK, let's forget the Rio Olympics.

It's time to pause and remember that Melbourne was granted the rights to hold the **1967** table tennis world championships, but that right was stripped from us when we were honest enough to declare that the Australian government would refuse entry to players from **North Vietnam** due to the Vietnam War. Curse our honesty.

Before we go further, I should probably make you aware of the **6** geographic regions which make up the ITTF.

**Africa** contains **54** federations. Many of these are developing nations, but developing extremely fast. **Nigeria** and **Egypt** stand out as 2 countries leading the field for the region.

**Asia** is the powerhouse region, with **45** federations containing the bulk of the world's top players.

**Europe** has the largest number of federations with **58**. **Germany** is the strongest at the moment, but it's a Frenchman who is the current European champion.

**Latin America** contains the **41** federations from South and Central America together with the Caribbean Islands, but excluding Bermuda - why, I don't know.

**North America** contains only **4** federations; The **USA**, **Canada**, **Bermuda**, and the **Virgin Islands**. For some reason **Mexico**, which appears on most maps to be on the North American continent, is not part of the North America region according to the ITTF. Apparently there was some sort of hostage exchange situation involving Bermuda and Mexico.

**Oceania** represents the **24** federations of our region and contains many small island nations... like New Zealand.

So let's get back to the main thrust of this story. The **62** table tennis World Championships held to date have been played in **19** different countries. And where are they? **12** are in Europe, **6** are in Asia, and **one** is in Africa, just. *Only once have the World championships been held outside Asia and Europe.* And that was held in Cairo, Egypt in 1939.

Asia and Europe, which between them have **103** federations, have held *61 of the 62* world championships. The other 4 regions, Africa, Latin America, North America and Oceania, which together have well over half of the federations, have had 1 world championship. The **76** federations of the Southern Hemisphere have never held a world championship.

And will this situation change? We live in hope. With **Thomas Wiekert** having just been re-appointed to the ITTF presidency, and with one of his campaign promises being to expand the appeal of the game, we can only wait to see if the promise is fulfilled.

But there are 4 regions who would love to see a world championship come to their part of the globe.

## G. O. A. T.

It's time to start an argument.

Who was the *Greatest of All Time*? I'll bet most of you would come up with different names. There's an awful lot to consider in a question like this. How could you possibly measure such a thing? Well, the simple answer is, you can't. But just because you can't do something has never stopped me from trying, so let's see if we can work out how to come up with a name.

How can you compare players from different era's? Players in the period prior to **1950's** were strictly amateur and were required to maintain an amateur status. In fact, the great Austrian and English player, and then reigning World Champion, **Richard Bergmann** was refused entry to the 1947 World Championships because he had played exhibition matches to entertain the troops during the war, as well as being part of the Harlem Globetrotters shows.

As well as that, players of the period before **1957** could play in world championships every year rather than every two years. But then again, being amateur meant taking time off whatever their normal jobs were and raising the money for travel and accommodation themselves. Players today have contracts and sponsorship deals which allow them to do nothing more than practice and play, as well as a career path into coaching if they choose to go that way.

Travel. That's another thing. Imagine trying to get to Stockholm, Budapest, Prague, Berlin, without the benefit of high-speed air and rail travel. There was none of this "being pampered in the pointy end of the plane" for players of the 20's, 30's and 40's. Many of them would drive for days through multiple countries across Europe just to get to the venue. Getting to an international tournament in the 1930's was almost as difficult as organising a holiday to America is today.

And while we're in that time period in Europe, let's not forget that minor inconvenience commonly known as World War II. With no championships between 1939 and 1947, how many careers were interrupted, cut short or forced to start late because of this.

But then again at the early championships, just turning up gave you an advantage. At the first World Championships in December 1926, the entire Women's draw consisted of 16 competitors of which only 4 were international players. But should we hold that against them? Let's not forget that if it wasn't for them, we might not have a game to play today.

Equipment has changed massively over the course of time as well. From hardbats, through to pimped rubber, to the controversy that was the early sponge bats, inverted rubber, boosting and speed glue, right up to the drug-free, cheating-free, totally legal and totally fair sport we have today (*slight pause while I take my tongue out of my cheek*). Changes in net height, ball size, time limits, scoring systems, etcetera, have all had an effect on the way the game is played.

So could a player from the 1930's using a simple wooden bat with a thin layer of pimped rubber and no sponge-backing compete against a modern-day champion? Not a chance. Could a modern-day player using a 1930's-style hardbat hold his own against the best of that era? We'll never know.

Players can only be compared against their contemporaries, and World Championships are where the best players congregate. Men's and Women's Singles have been played in every World Championship since 1926, as have Men's Doubles and Mixed Doubles. Women's Doubles made its debut at the 1928 World Championship.

To try to come up with a system to measure greatness isn't easy. Although it's not perfect and leaves the process open to argument (*remember? I said it was time to start one*), the easiest method I could find is to allocate points to results. I decided on allocating **6** points for a Singles Gold medal, **4** points for a Singles Silver, and **2** points for a Singles Bronze. For Gold, Silver and Bronze in either Men's, Women's or Mixed Doubles, I've allocated **3**, **2** or **1** points respectively.

The numbers produced by this were staggering. *Who are the big winners? Ma Long?* Not even close. With **1** Gold and **3** Bronze medals in Singles, and **1** Silver and **1** Bronze in Men's Doubles, he finished with a total of **17** points. The great Swede, **Jan-Ove Waldner**? With **2** Gold, **2** Silver and **2** Bronze in Singles and **1** Silver in Men's Doubles, he has a total of **24** points. One of my personal heroes, **Ichiro Ogimura** has **2** Gold, **1** Silver and **1** Bronze in Singles, **2** Gold, **1** Silver & **2** Bronze in Men's Doubles, and **3** Gold in Mixed Doubles for a total of **37** points. In a career running from **1929** to **1935**, the great Hungarian player who eventually moved to Australia, **Michael Szabados** won **1** Gold, **3** Silver and **1** Bronze in Singles, **6** Gold in Men's Doubles and **3** Gold, **1** Silver and **1** Bronze in Mixed Doubles, giving him a magnificent total of **50**. Can anyone beat that?

Yes. Quite easily. Playing from **1929** to **1948**, in a career divided by war, and having to move to a new country, Hungarian/Englishman **Victor Barna** won **5** Gold, **1** Silver and **1** Bronze in Men's Singles, **8** Gold, **1** Silver and **2** Bronze in Men's Doubles, and **2** Gold, **2** Silver and **3** Bronze in Mixed Doubles for an amazing total of **83** points. On *two* occasions, Barna won Gold in Singles, Men's Doubles and Mixed Doubles in the same year.

But that's not the end of the story. The Women's side of the draw is just as interesting with some big totals.

Of recent champions, you can't go past **Wang Nan**. With **3** Gold and **1** Silver in Singles, **5** Gold and **1** Silver in Women's Doubles, and **1** Gold, **1** Silver and **2** Bronze in Mixed Doubles, a total of **46** points makes her the best of the modern women players. Not many people have heard of **Anna Sipos**. From Hungary and playing from **1929** to **1935**, Sipos won **2** Gold, **1** Silver and **2** Bronze in Singles, **6** Gold and **1** Bronze in Women's Doubles, and **3** Gold, **3** Silver and **1** Bronze in Mixed Doubles for a total of **55** points.

Romanian, **Angelica Rozeanu** had a playing career interrupted by war. From her first appearance in **1937** to her swansong in **1957**, she amassed **6 consecutive** Gold in Singles, **3** Gold, **2** Silver and **2** Bronze in Women's Doubles, and **3** Gold, and **2** Bronze in Mixed Doubles to give her a total of **67** points. Angelica won the Singles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles Gold medals in 1953. *What could have been?*

From the first World Championships, Hungarian **Maria Mednyanszky** showed nothing but class. Taking Gold in the first **5** Women's Singles, followed by **2** Silvers, together with **6** Gold and **2** Bronze in Women's Doubles, and **6** Gold, **2** Silver and **2** Bronze in Mixed Doubles, Mednyanszky accumulated a total of **85** points. On *three* occasions, she won Gold in Singles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles in the same year.

**Victor Barna, 83 points. Maria Mednyanszky, 85 points.** I'm not sure anyone will better these amazing efforts. *Greatest of All Time?* Let the arguments begin.



## **JUNE TOURNAMENTS**

Brisbane will host the **Australasian Veteran Open** from the **28<sup>th</sup>** to the **30<sup>th</sup>**. Victoria usually perform extremely well at these events, so we look forward to topping the table again.

Locally, the **Queens Birthday** weekend is chockers with table tennis. While the tables at **MSAC** remain silently gathering dust, the **Victorian Metropolitan Championships** will be held at the **Kilsyth Leisure Centre** on the **10<sup>th</sup>** and **11<sup>th</sup>**. This teams championship will see the best players from the 21 clubs in the metropolitan area being represented. On the same weekend, **Bendigo** will also be holding a **Teams Championship** for 19 associations from country Victoria.

**Bendigo** will be in action again on the **25<sup>th</sup>** of June for their **Veterans Open**. The Vets may use this as a warm-up for the big one in Brisbane a week later.

## **ON THE WEB**

Last November I wrote about the proposed new **T2 A-Pac league**. Well, it's here. Being held in the **Pinewood Studios** complex in **Malaysia**, the emphasis is on covering the event with the type of equipment never before used for table tennis. With **US\$1.5 million** up for grabs, the competition is bound to be fierce.

The list of players who have signed up for this is impressive. The Men's draw includes **Dimitrij Ovtcharov, Jun Mizutani, Timo Boll**, and **Tomokazu Harimoto**. The Women's draw includes **Feng Tianwei, Cheng I-Ching, Georgina Pota**, and **Elizabeta Samara**.

**Round 1** of the competition will be *live streamed* from **June 28** to **June 30**. Go to [www.t2apac.com](http://www.t2apac.com).

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## **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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