



# **ACROSS THE NET**

## **Melton Table Tennis**

**March 2016**

### **OUR FIRST COACH, MORE SERVICE STUFF, HENZELL RETIRES & A FORGOTTEN CHAMP**

In this edition, we welcome the first qualified coach at our club, discuss why the Chinese National Team have possibly put out a contract on me, bid farewell to a multiple Australian champion, and remember someone you've probably never heard of.

### **SUMMER SEASON UNDERWAY**

We are now well underway with our first season of the year. After a delayed start due to circumstances beyond our control we have completed a few weeks, and the competition is intense. Once again we have been able to run 4 grades, all of which are proving very even.

Due to the delayed start, all rounds for the summer season have been pushed back by a week. This will mean that the Grand Finals will be played on **Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> of March**, which is the night before Good Friday. We hope this doesn't inconvenience anyone.

**Thursday the 31<sup>st</sup> of March** and **Thursday the 7<sup>th</sup> of April** will be practice and grading nights for the Winter season. If you know anyone who is interested in joining us, bring them down to try out on those nights.

### **OUR FIRST COACH ROLLS IN**

Melton Table Tennis is proud to announce that **Chris Addis** has completed the **NCAS Level 1 Coaching course**. In a first for the club, we now have a qualified and certified coach to assist our members, junior and senior, in improving their game.

Attending 2 courses over 3 days, Chris received instruction from supercoach **Alois Rosario**, former Australian Champion & TTV CEO, **Dennis Makaling**, and Australian National coach, **Jens Lang**.

MTTA will be assisting Chris in organising training courses in the near future, but for now please join us in congratulating Chris on this marvellous achievement.



### **A COMRADE'S ILLNESS**

It is with sadness that we report that illness is keeping **Craig Archman** from our midst. Unfortunately, Craig suffered a stroke on the morning of our first round and has spent the time since then recovering in hospital.

While it will take some time before we see him at the club, he is progressing well in his recovery. I'm sure you'll join me in wishing Craig a speedy and complete recovery and we look forward to seeing his smile at the club again soon. If you are able to visit Craig during his recovery, he would certainly appreciate it.

## **SERVICE RULE RANT**

In the last edition I published an article discussing the service rules as laid out in the rules of table tennis, which should be enforced for all competition. Yes, there are some grey points in there but all in all it's pretty clear what constitutes a legal serve compared to what is blatant cheating.

As I said then, the top level players are extremely adept at hiding the ball during the service motion to give them an advantage over their opponent. And let's not muck about, one of the most obvious offenders is current world number 1, **Ma Long**.

The following shows a typical Ma Long serve in a sequence of 5 still shots. These were originally published by **Larry Hodges** in his blog on [tabletenniscoaching.com](http://tabletenniscoaching.com).



So based on last month's article, how many service rules are being broken by the top player in the world? Let's count them.

1. Rule **2.06.02** states that **"The server shall then project the ball near vertically upwards ...."** The ball is not being thrown near vertically upwards, breaking this rule. In comparison to the line on the table, it is clearly being thrown both sideways and backwards, as Ma Long can get his head in front of the ball.
2. Rule **2.06.04** states that from the start of the serve until the ball is struck, **"...it shall not be hidden from the receiver by the server"**. The ball is clearly being hidden by his head during the service motion.
3. Rule **2.06.05** states that **"As soon as the ball has been projected, the server's free arm and hand shall be removed from the space between the ball and the net..."** His free hand is not being removed after the toss has been made, breaking this rule. This is often done to distract both the receiver and the umpire from the fact that the ball is being hidden by his head.
4. Rule **2.06.06** states that **"It is the responsibility of the player to serve so that the umpire or the assistant umpire can be satisfied that he or she complies with the requirements of the Laws..."** All of the points above should make it clear to either the main umpire or the assistant umpire, but they never call a fault on this.
5. Rule **2.06.06.01** states that **"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."** So this is an out for the umpire to cover them in case they are not 100% sure it's a legal serve, but it still doesn't happen.

*Our sport doesn't need any rule changes to fix this. The rules are already in place. They simply need to be enforced.*

And if you think I'm picking on Ma Long and this is just a one off, have look at the next page. All of these photos are of different serves in one match. It was the final of the Men's World Cup and saw Ma Long being crowned as world champion. Tell me if you think he's hiding the ball.



Complete this sentence; If a picture paints a thousand words, then 15 pictures .....

### **POSSIBLE SERVICE RULE CHANGES ?**

Each year, in conjunction with the running of the World Championships is the Annual General Meeting of the **Swaythling International Club**. This is the body responsible for the running of table tennis World Championship and Veterans events.

It has been reported that the current problems with the service rule and its enforcement (or lack thereof) is to be discussed at this meeting.

Will there be a result? I doubt it. The entire meeting is scheduled to be completed in just an hour and a half. Even if this is put to a committee to investigate, it will be another 12 months before any changes will be brought to bear. In the meantime, we will have a year of top level players setting a poor example for those who admire them and aspire to be like them.

Interestingly, at the **USATT** committee meeting prior to the U.S. Open in December last year, a motion was put that the existing service rules be enforced at the tournament. Not *changed*. Just **enforced**. The motion was **defeated** by 6 votes to 1.

Enough said.

### **MARCH TOURNAMENTS**

The **World Teams Championships** are continuing in Kuala Lumpur until the **6<sup>th</sup> of March**. Head to [www.ittf.com/tv](http://www.ittf.com/tv) for live streaming of the event. *Go Aussies!!!*

**Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> of March** sees the running of the **Bendigo Open Junior Tournament**.

All eyes will be on Croydon over the Labour Day weekend with the **Croydon Open Veterans** on **Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup>**, the **Croydon Open Juniors** on **Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup>**, and the **Croydon Open Seniors** on **Monday the 14<sup>th</sup>**.

A pleasant trip down the coast will get you to the **Warrnambool Open Junior Tournament** on **Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup>**.

Bendigo will be the focus when they host the **Oceania Championships** from the **20<sup>th</sup>** to the **24<sup>th</sup>**, and the **Oceania Olympic Qualification Tournament** from the **22<sup>nd</sup>** to the **25<sup>th</sup>**.

Dandenong will take the attention with the **Dandenong Open Juniors** on **Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup>**, the **Dandenong Open Seniors** on Easter Sunday, the **27<sup>th</sup>**, and the **Dandenong Open Veterans** on Easter Monday, the **28<sup>th</sup>**.

### **PARALYMPIC TEAM CAPTAINS NAMED**

The captains of the Australian team for the 2016 Rio Paralympics have been named with wheelchair racer, **Kurt Fearnley** and table tennis player, **Daniela Di Toro** appointed, subject to them qualifying for the event.

Daniela Di Toro should be a well-known name to anyone who has followed tennis over the past couple of decades. As a wheelchair tennis player Daniela has won **10 Australian Opens**, **3 British Opens**, **2 French Opens** and **2 U.S. Opens**, as well as a **Paralympic Gold** medal in London 2012.

In 2014, Danni saw the error of her ways and changed over to table tennis. Playing out of the Coburg Table Tennis Club, Danni won the **Oceania Para Championship** in 2015 and is now looking towards Rio 2016.

I'm sure all readers of *Across The Net* will wish Kurt, Danni and the rest of the team all the very best.

## END OF AN ERA FOR AUSSIE TABLE TENNIS



On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, in an Olympic year, **William Henzell** announced his retirement from competitive table tennis at the age of 33. He is considered by some to be the greatest table tennis player Australia has produced, and his list of achievements would back that up. Born in Adelaide, William moved to Sweden at the age of 14 to further his career.

He has won **13 Australian Championships, 5 Australian Opens, 9 Oceania Championships**, and he has represented Australia at **8 World Championships, 3 Olympic Games, and 4 Commonwealth Games**, including winning a Silver medal at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

We salute a career well played.

## IT WASN'T MY FAULT

It's good to analyse your play immediately after a match. While things are fresh, you should replay the match in your mind. It's the best way to re-inforce all of those things you did right.... assuming that you did things right.

But what if the match didn't go your way? What if (*shock, horror*) you lost? It wasn't your fault, was it? Surely you have a reason for the loss already on the tip of your tongue. Come on, then. Spit it out. What happened this time?

A member of the **New Jersey Table Tennis Club** was observant enough to note the excuses players at his club used after losing a match, and I'm sure that we've all heard some of these where we play. Here is 10 of the best.

1. There was too much glare coming off the table.
2. It was too hot.
3. It was too cold.
4. My opponent didn't play well enough for me to care.
5. My opponent got too many nets / edges.
6. I haven't been training enough.
7. I've been training too much.
8. The floor was too slippery.
9. My opponent was staring at me.
10. There was a towel hanging on the barrier.

And do you know the one thing all of these excuses have in common? *They're excuses.*

The glare was there for your opponent as well. And it was just as hot or cold for them. That towel was hanging there in the same place for both of you. And you must have been staring at your opponent for you to notice he was staring at you.

Put the excuses aside. Replay the match in your mind and learn from the mistakes you made. *You don't need excuses. You need a positive attitude. **Winners don't have excuses. Winners have FOCUS.***

## **OTHER RULE CHANGES PROPOSED**

As mentioned above, the **Swaythling International Club** Annual General Meeting will take place in conjunction with the running of the World Team's Championship in **Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**.

At this meeting any proposal put forward by an association can be heard. Many of these are of an administrative nature and the average player wouldn't notice any affect that these may have. Others however, can directly affect the manner in which the game is played. Much of it is technical, such as the report on the investigation of the **co-efficient of drag** on the surface of the tables. Believe me, if you're ever having trouble sleeping, just read one of these equipment reports and you'll be out like a light.

Other matters are far more interesting and, if you have a mind for it, amusing. Like the report from the **Referees and Umpires committee** that they have produced a set of instructions to explain to umpires how to signal an illegal serve. You see, the last time the service rules were changed was in **2000**. You'd think that there may have been *something* in place in the intervening 16 years. But I'm sure we'll see many more illegal serves being called now that the umpires know which way to move their arms to demonstrate this.

Okay. That's it. I *promise* not to talk about the service rules any more in this edition.

That's what I *would have* said if it wasn't for our friends from the **Swiss Table Tennis Association** who have put forward a proposal to have the height of the net *increased*. They argue that raising the height of the net would reduce the importance of the serve and the receive and would, therefore make the game more spectacular. They say that they have discussed this with a lot of top players who all agree with them. *I'm sorry, but nobody asked me.*

The height of the net was lowered in **1938** to make the game faster and more exciting. Wouldn't raising the height have the opposite effect?

Or perhaps we could look at the rule change proposed by the **United Arab Emirates Table Tennis Association**, which is simply to delete rule 2.9.1.1. This rule currently states that a serve shall be called a let "**... if in service the ball touches the net assembly, provided the service is otherwise correct ...**"

So what they are proposing is that the serve can hit the net and, providing it falls onto the receiver's side of the table it is in play and the server doesn't have to serve the ball again. They say that this would make the game more exciting and would help to limit the number of stoppages in the game.

I can see players actually aiming to clip the top of the net if this rule gets through. If both of the above changes were made, wouldn't that shake up the game. *78 years* of playing with the net set at its current height. Even some of the Vets wouldn't remember the previous net height. And a net cord has been a let for at least *90 years*.

And here's another change we don't need. The **Hong Kong Table Tennis Association** has proposed a change to the rule which governs the manufacture of bats.

Currently, the rules state that the make-up of the blade must be **85%** wood. The remainder can be carbon fibre or other materials. The proposal suggests that this rule be abolished and that blades can be made of any material.

Who does this change benefit? Certainly not your average club player. Can you imagine the cost of a 100% carbon-fibre blade? And what other materials would they come up with?

It'd be **Dennis Lillee's** aluminium bat all over again.

### **SMALL IN STATURE, BIG IN ABILITY**

It gets cold in Sweden. Very cold. It gets so cold that the country is renowned the world over for its lack of brass monkeys. With this sort of weather, it's no wonder that indoor sports like table tennis are popular.

And the Swedish love table tennis. They were involved in the first **World Championships** in 1926, have hosted the World Championships **6** times (1928, 1949, 1957, 1967, 1985 1993), and they have held many other first class events, including last year's **Men's World Cup**. The Swedish Table Tennis Association was formed in 1926. To celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1951, they held a tournament attended by over **6,000** players from over 600 different clubs.

Their success includes 3 World Champions. 2 of these are household names in the table tennis world; **Jorgen Persson** and **Jan-Ove Waldner**. But the third champion is little mentioned outside Sweden.

**Stellan Bengtsson** was born in Falkenberg in 1952. Encouraged by his parents, he began his table tennis career at the age of 8 and soon joined the famous Falkenberg Table Tennis club. A left-hander, he relied on a combination of speed and efficiency of movement to prevail over opponents. Progressing quickly through the ranks, he won a place on the Swedish National Team and earned the right to represent his country at the 1971 World Championships in Nagoya, Japan.

Standing only 167cm tall, he attracted the nickname of "**Mini-Stellan**". At just 18 years of age nothing was expected of the young Swede, but he surprised everyone by beating **Shigeo Itoh** of Japan to take the Singles World Championship. Two years later in Sarajevo, he backed this up with a gold medal in the Men's Doubles and a gold in the Men's Teams. The 1971 victory made Bengtsson the youngest person to win a Singles World Championship. It also made him the first left-handed player to win a table tennis World Championship.

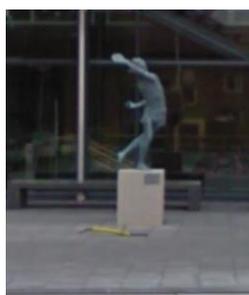


With 3 World Championship gold medals, a European Championship gold in singles, a European Championship gold in doubles, five European Championships in teams and 65 gold from other international championships, Stellan Bengtsson retired from competition and moved into a very successful coaching career.

Coaching the Swedish National team for 4 years and the Danish National team for 5 years, Bengtsson also coached in Germany and Qatar before moving to the USA in 2006.

The list of players coached by Bengtsson reads like a who's who of European table tennis and includes **Jan-Ove Waldner**, **Jorgen Persson**, **Peter Karlsson** and **Michael Maze**.

At the 1973 World Championships in Sarajevo, Stellan met the American player **Angelita Rosal**. With a Filipino father and a Sioux Indian mother, Rosal was a 10-time U.S. National champion. The couple married, and have 3 children. They now run a table tennis training academy in San Diego, California.



They are also heavily involved in coaching Para athletes, an activity they began due to Stellan's friendship with American Para player, **Mike Dempsey**. "*They are good athletes*", Stellan said emphatically. "*They try just as hard as able bodied players and they appreciate what you try to do for them; you get so much back from them.*"

In 2006, several Rotary clubs around Falkenberg commissioned a statue of Stellan Bengtsson. This statue now stands at the entrance to the Falkenberg Sports Hall.

## **ON THE WEB**

So you've come back for a new season and realise you're a bit rusty in the skill department. Or maybe you're new to table tennis and have discovered that there's more to the game than you thought. In either case, you should jump on to [www.pingskills.com](http://www.pingskills.com)

This site is dedicated to improving your game, no matter what your current skill level is. It contains many video tutorials, an "Ask The Coach" section, and a "Vault", where you can enter your match results and information on your opponents. If you like what you see, you should consider taking out a "Premium Membership" to gain access to even more detailed videos and features.

If you're serious about your game, you'll check out this site.

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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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