



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

May 2016

WE SIZZLED, PARA'S GET NAMED, AND THE AUSSIE OPEN COMES TO MELBOURNE

In this edition, we congratulate our Paralympic Team, discuss why we can't get a World Championship, wrap-up the results of the Australian Para Champs, tell you why you *must* attend an upcoming event, and have an in-depth talk with a bass-playing, spider-loving, football fanatic who plays table tennis.

IF YOU BURN IT, THEY WILL COME



Early last month, MTTA was lucky enough to get a spot at the **Bunnings Warehouse** in Melton for a Sausage Sizzle.

Able to lead by **Chris Blake** at the grill, supported by **Larry Hallinan** slicing onions and counting money, with **Geof Walker** and **Jason Craddock** filling the orders and **Angela Cricchiola** taking orders and handing out flyers, this event raised a considerable amount of money to support the club.

Also assisting in the preparation and clean-up were **Matt** and **Dean Camilleri**, and **Chris Addis** was there supporting the club as well.



A special thanks to Angela who worked tirelessly all day, not only taking orders but also promoting the club, handing out flyers and providing details to anyone who was interested. A great effort.

We will be holding a similar fund-raiser in December, and would like to see more members involved in assisting on the day.

OVERHEARD

Many of us who have been around the club for a few years would have noticed the large increase in junior members over the past few seasons. This growth is something we should encourage and promote.

This season, one of the teams in **C1 Grade** comprises **Will Corluka** (captain), **Jesse Fletcher-Gass**, and **Connor Ziday**. With a combined age that would be the envy of most MTTA members, this is by far the youngest team ever to take to the table at our club.

In Round 1 they came up against a team of which **Ross Lappin** was a member. Ross is the father of 2 girls not too much younger than his opponents on the night.

And the comment from Ross during play? *"Shouldn't this team be in bed by now?"*

WILL WE EVER GET ONE ?

I'd like to talk to you about World Championships. Table tennis World Championships, to be precise. They're those things that happen once a year somewhere else. Does that sound a little harsh? Well, let's look at the facts.

This year is the **90th** anniversary of the first table tennis World Championships and the formation of the **ITTF**. There have been **60** World Championships played. Not surprisingly, the majority of the early championships were played in Europe, and many of the more recent ones have been played in Asia.

For the first **30** championships, from 1926 to 1969, all except 4 were played in European cities. The exceptions were **1939** in **Cairo**, **1952** in **Bombay**, **1956** in **Tokyo**, and **1961** in **Beijing**.

In the 30 championships since then, **16** have been played in Asian countries, with all others played in Europe.

By region? The ITTF divides the world of table tennis into **6** regions. These are **Africa**, **Asia**, **Europe**, **Latin America** (which covers Central and South America together with the Caribbean nations), **North America** (containing only Canada, Bermuda and the USA), and **Oceania**.

The **Africa** region has hosted **1** World Championship, which was in Cairo, Egypt in 1939. **Asia** has hosted **19** championships. **Europe** has had **40**.

The remaining championships have been spread across Latin America, North America and Oceania which combined makes a grand total of **zero**.

No... Wait... *What?!?!* Surely that can't be? Between them, the Africa, Latin America, North America and Oceania regions have over half of the countries represented by the ITTF, but have hosted only one world championship. And that one was nearly **80 years ago**.

There are **222** countries affiliated with the ITTF. Only **20** of them have hosted World Championship events, and events scheduled for 2017, 2018 and 2019 are going to countries who have hosted **18** world championships between them already.

And there has never been a table tennis world championship event held in the Southern Hemisphere. Why? As I've written about before, **Melbourne** was granted the rights for the **1967** World Championships, so it can't be the tyranny of distance. I can't believe that with so many of the affiliated countries none of them has put their hand up to host it. And table tennis happens indoors, so it can't be a seasonal issue.

Melbourne didn't get to hold those championships. In **1965** the **Australian Table Tennis Association** informed the ITTF that the Australian government intended on refusing entry visas to players from **North Vietnam** due to the Vietnam War, and we lost the rights to hold the championships.

In **1975**, the **India Table Tennis Association** *knew* that players from **Israel** and **South Africa** would be denied entry to the country when they arrived for the championships in **Calcutta**, but they didn't inform the ITTF and so were sanctioned but were allowed to hold the championships.

The ITTF were warned late last year that players from **Israel** would be refused entry into **Malaysia** for the recent **World Teams Championship**, but did nothing apart from warning the **Malaysian Table Tennis Association** that action may follow. Nothing has yet been announced.

Perhaps we were just too damn honest.

AUSSIE OPEN IN MELBOURNE

From the 8th to the 12th of June, the **Australian Open Table Tennis Championships** will be played at the **Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre** in Albert Park.

What's that you say? Top line table tennis being played at the home of table tennis in the heart of the city? Yes, I know. I'm not sure how that one snuck through the web either. But it's here, and with it comes some of the best players in the world.

Although the full list of players is yet to be confirmed, the **world number 7** in both Men's and Women's, **Jun Mizutani** from **Japan** and **Feng Tienwei** from **Singapore**, will be attending. As far as quality goes, if the players who competed last year return, it will mean that the majority of the **Japanese** and **South Korean Olympic teams** will be playing right before our eyes.

And let's not forget the **Australian Olympic team** who should all be there as well.

In last July's edition of *Across The Net*, I lamented the poor crowd attendance at this tournament when it was played in Tweed Heads, and I suggested that, if they wanted to get a decent crowd they should hold the championships in Melbourne.

This is your opportunity to prove me right. As I stated in the previous article, we've never had a World Championship. To prove ourselves worthy of that, we need to get good crowds attending major events and demonstrate our interest to the powers that be.

If any of you are interested in attending, please let me know and we will endeavour to arrange easy transport together.

MAY TOURNAMENTS

The tournament season is in full swing, and there are tournaments on nearly every weekend.

The 14th sees the running of the **Ballarat Open Junior and Senior Tournament**.

On the 22nd of May, MSAC will be running the **Victorian Closed Senior and Para Championships**. The best in the state will be competing in this tournament, including some whom we all know. Make a day of it and watch some of our friends competing in this important event.

On Saturday the 28th of May, Sunbury will be running their **Open Junior Tournament**. It will be well worth the short drive over to see some of the best juniors from the region in action.

Sunday the 29th of May sees our friends at Sunbury running their **Open Veterans Tournament**. Again, there will be players we're all familiar with competing, so go over and cheer them on, or enter and test yourself against the best pensioners in the state.

That is, of course, provided you're not going over to the **2016 World Veteran's Championship** in **Alicante, Spain**. This is on from the 23rd to the 29th and looks like being the biggest World Vets ever.

And that's saying something. Current entry lists show that the **Over 50's Men's** will be fought out by **995** players. And the **Over 50's Women's** has **349** participants entered. There are **78 Aussies** attending out of the **4,600** players who will be enjoying the Mediterranean summer.

We wish all of the Aussies the best of luck.

PARA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS



During April, the **Australian Para National Championships** were held in Perth and a number of Victorians did us proud. With competitors from all around the country being joined by a number from overseas, there were some great results for the Victorian team (pictured left).

Danni Di Toro had a week to remember, taking the Gold in the **Women's Open Wheelchair Singles**, sharing the Gold with fellow Victorian, **Rosalie Turnbull** in the **Women's Open Wheelchair Doubles** event, as well as Silver in the **Open Wheelchair Mixed Doubles** with Victorian **Graeme Walters**. Danni also won Silver in the **PingSkills Challenge Wheelchair**, Silver for Victoria in the **Class 3-5 Teams** event (where she teamed up with Rosalie Turnbull and Graeme Walters), and won the **Perpetual Award for Class 1-5 Females**.

Melissa Tapper took Gold medals in the **Women's Open Standing Singles**, the **Women's Open Standing Doubles**, **Class 9-10 Singles**, and the **PingSkills Challenge Standing** where she beat **Sam Von Einem** from South Australia.

Barak Mizrachi took the Bronze medal in the **Men's Open Standing Singles**, Silver in the **Men's Open Standing Doubles**, Gold in the **Open Standing Mixed Doubles**, Gold in **Class 8 Singles**, and Gold in the **Class 8-10 + Deaf Teams** event.

Trevor Hirth again met his kryptonite in **Rungroj Thainiyom** from Thailand. Trevor took the Silver in both the **Class 6 Singles** and **Class 6-7 Teams** with **Sy Pham**. Sy also took out the **Class 7 Singles** Silver medal, pushing **Jake Ballestrino** to the Bronze. Jake also took Bronze in the **Class 6-7 Teams** event.

Rory Carroll took Gold in the **Class 11 and Deaf Combined Doubles**, Rory teamed up with fellow Victorian, **John Bird** to take the Bronze medal in the **Class 11 Teams** event. **Tim Bird** grabbed a Silver medal in the **Class 11 and Deaf Combined Doubles**, and was a member of the Gold medal **Class 11 Teams** together with **Aaron Bird**.

Our warmest congratulations to all for participating.

PARALYMPIANS NAMED

Australia has named a 5-person team to represent the country at the table tennis events at the **2016 Rio Paralympics**, and three of the five are from Victoria.

After competing in 5 Paralympic Games in wheelchair tennis, **Danni Di Toro** has been selected to represent Australia in table tennis, as well as being selected as co-captain of the Australian Paralympic team.

Melissa Tapper will be the first Australian to compete in both Olympic and Paralympic Games. After finishing fourth in her class at the **London Paralympics**, and picking up a Bronze medal at the **Glasgow Commonwealth Games**, Melissa is looking forward to a strong showing in Rio.

Barak Mizrachi will be competing in **Class 8** at his first Paralympic Games. Barak has gained considerable international experience at various open championships over recent years and will be looking to impress.

The other Australian team-members are **Sam Von Einem** from South Australia in Class 11, and **Andrea McDonnell** from Queensland in Class 10.

TABLE TENNIS CHANGED MY LIFE

The first time I ever saw **Trevor Hirth** was in 2013 at the *Coburg Table Tennis Club*. I was there to watch the Super League being played, and some of the Para squad were training on the back tables. With a mop of unruly hair well past his shoulders, and a beard approaching his navel, Trevor looked like an extra from a Mad Max movie, but when I saw the Melbourne Demons jumper he was wearing I knew he was a man of outstanding integrity and extremely good taste.

The long hair has gone, and the beard is shorter, but the love of sport is still there. I had the opportunity to have a chat with Trevor and started by congratulating him on his appointment as chairman of the **ITTF Para Players Committee**.

"It all happened pretty fast", he told me. "The first meeting was in Denmark at the start of October at the European Championships. Not only was I representing Oceania, I was the acting chairman because the rep from Africa who was chairman at the time was playing in the African Regionals. Since then we've held an online election and I was voted in as chairman of the committee."

Like many of us, Trevor started playing table tennis with family and friends. *"When I was growing up, grandpa had built a table, originally for my father and we played under our carport. Neighbours had tables and I used to play against them, and obviously when you go camping there's always a table in the games room. I developed a good serve which is still the strength of my game. It's something that you can practice on your own."*

Trevor started playing in the old **Western Suburbs** competition before moving to the **Essendon/East Keilor Churches** competition. With a drivers licence, he was able to look further afield and took up play variously at **Sunshine, Kingsville/Yarraville, Sunbury** and **Coburg**, usually on more than one night a week. It was from his play at Coburg that things changed for Trevor.

"Mick Tomlinson (Victorian Para Development coach) noticed that I had a disability and invited me to play for the Para's. I was classified initially as a Class 7, but when they saw me play, I was reclassified as a Class 6. I played the 2013 Nationals in Ballarat and took out the title without dropping a set. That got me into the Australian squad."

Things got bigger and better from there. *"My debut tournament was in Thailand in 2013. I got through to the finals and came up against the Paralympic Gold Medallist (**Rungroj Thainiyom**) playing in his first tournament after London and lost 3-1. It was a massive event with numerous television channels covering it, and high ranking government officials watching it, and they weren't there to watch me."*



Playing in the biggest tournament in his career to that point, Trevor admitted to me that he got absolutely smashed at the World Championships in Beijing in 2014. *"I got a wildcard to play there. All of the top ten in the world in my class were there and I got destroyed. It took me a little while to get over because I got smashed and twice by the same player. I was almost embarrassing and I realised I had to do something about it."* This was the catalyst for Trevor to take a more serious approach to the game. *"I quit my job and took up table tennis full time."*

"Since the World Championships I've got so much more that I know I need to focus on. There's so much that I know I can improve on. Everything from preparation, stretching, warming up properly, and going through a routine."

In November last year, Trevor had success at the **ITTF PTT Para Open in Belgium**. *“I got my first gold. It was in a Teams event which probably doesn’t mean as much as a Singles medal. I teamed up with a young bloke from Sweden, **Michael Azulay**, who had been on the international scene for quite a while and was ranked slightly above me. It was a relatively weak field and a smaller event, but we were happy to come away with the gold.”*

And all of this doesn’t come cheap. Trevor is seeking sponsorship to allow him to push his training even further. While many of the top-ranked players from overseas have various sponsorship deals, they are harder to come by for Para athletes. But this doesn’t have to be the case. **EDF Energy** was a major sponsor of the 2012 London Paralympics. **Gareth Wynn** from EDF Energy was quoted in **Marketing Week** magazine as saying, *“There are lots of human stories around the Paralympics. By partnering with the athletes you can start to achieve some powerful brand marketing benefits.”*



In January this year, in his capacity as the Oceania representative of the Para Players committee, Trevor visited **Fiji** for nearly 3 weeks. It’s a tough life, but someone has to do it. While there, he assisted in a training camp for para players from the island, and also competed in the **Fiji Open**. He even made the news on the FBC and Fiji One TV. Supported by the ITTF-Oceania, TTA’s **Smash Down Barriers Program** and the **Fijian Table Tennis Association** it was the first regional development camp organised by **Christian Holtz**, featuring **25** Para Table Tennis players and **14** coaches from **9** Oceania countries. Trevor took home gold in both the Open Class 6-10 and Men’s standing 6-10 events.

Every one of us has someone who has made an impact on our journey. I asked Trevor who had been the biggest influence on his table tennis. *“Mick Tomlinson influenced me to give para’s a go, and also **Alois Rosario** has had a big influence on me.”*

Trevor is very lucky, and was very open about his choice of blade and rubber. *“The Para’s are sponsored by **Nittaku** and **DHS**, so I’m currently using a new **Nittaku Barwell Fleet** blade which is a 9-ply blade including 2 layers of fibreglass. Rubbers are **Andro Rasant Powergrip** on the backhand, and **Nittaku Alhelg** on the forehand.”*

With his international experience, I couldn’t help asking the burning question; If you could change one rule in table tennis, what would it be? *“I wouldn’t change the rule,”* Trevor said, *“but I’d make sure that the serving rule is properly enforced. I actually got called for an illegal serve at the World Championships because my ball toss dipped to below the level of the table but other players can get away with breaking the service rules all the time.”*

Table tennis takes up most of Trevor’s time. As well as playing pennant at both Sunbury and Geelong, he is training 2 nights a week on his own with a robot, and with the Para squad on the weekends. Combine this with his love of the **Melbourne Demons** and **Melbourne Victory**, it’s a surprise to some that he also has time to play in a band as well.

With a name of **Diabolical Demon Director**, I made a guess that it wasn’t a folk-rock group. *“Thrash Metal from the 80’s, similar to early Metallica”,* Trevor assured me. *“We’ve recently recorded our first album. It’s still being mixed and we are waiting on the cover artwork to be completed. I play bass, and I’m the driver for the band. I’m the only one with a car. The drummer is a female who is also a tattoo artist, and so she does all of the artwork as well.”*





So, with time running out for the interview, I pressed my luck and went for the big question. "Of all the players in the Para Squad", I asked, "who would be best on **'Dancing With The Stars'**?"

"I hate those shows", sighed Trevor. "I'm the only one who gets up, so I'd have to say me. At Belgium, I was up with some of the Class 7 and wheelchair guys on the dance floor for most of the night. We were lifting the wheelchair guys into the air. At all of the tournaments, the closing dinner is always the best part, win or lose."

And I'll let Trevor have the last word. ***"Table tennis changed my life. It was something I loved to do for fun, now I love to do it seriously."***

ON THE WEB

Did you know that there is more than one Matt Hetherington? Yes, Matt use to play at our club, but the Matt Hetherington I'm talking about here is a New Zealand professional currently coaching in the USA.

www.mhtabletennis.com is run by Matt and includes coaching tips and tricks, table tennis videos, links to other interesting sites, interviews with top players, and much more.

What's your favourite table tennis site on the web? Let us know so we can share it with other members.

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