



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

November 2017

Edition 40

PRES NIGHT, PARA SUCCESS, BATON COMING, BATS GALORE, AND INJECTING FUN INTO THE GAME

In this edition, we preview our presentation night, praise our para's, discuss the Queen's delivery service, look at bats throughout history, and work out why Lance Armstrong is feeling that the pressure is finally off him.

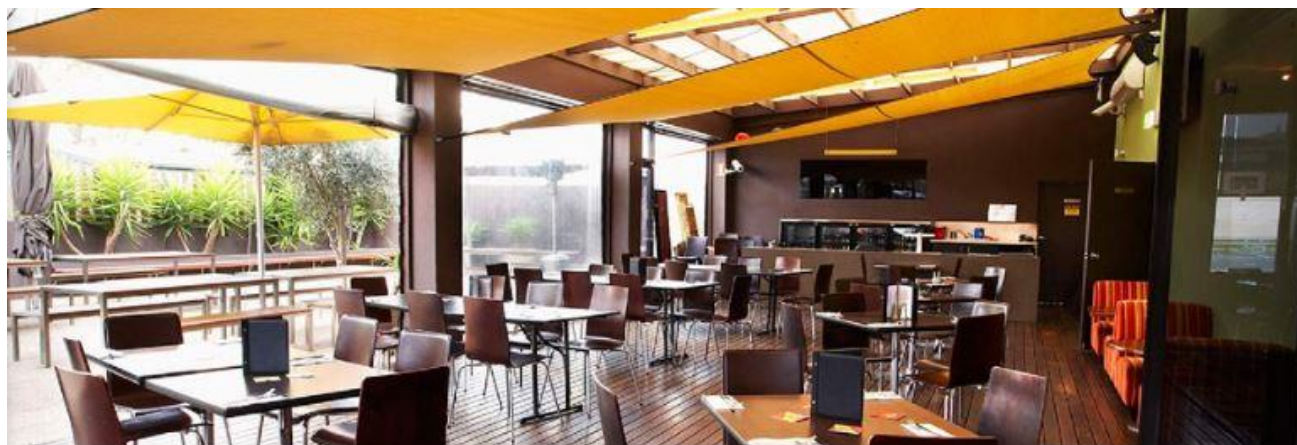
PRESENTATION NIGHT PREVIEW

After the success of last year's event, the **2017 MTTA Presentation Night** will once again be held at **Q-Lounge, 20 McKenzie Street, Melton**. The event will commence at 7:00pm and will run until 10:30pm.

With over **100 trophies** being given out to some very deserving winners this should be a great event.

We will again be having a guest speaker on the night. All of those who attended last year will remember the inspirational talk given by supercoach **Alois Rosario**. Our guest speaker this year is someone who Alois says inspires him.

Details on ticket pricing will follow soon, so keep your eye on the noticeboard. Finger food will be provided, and the area has a private bar.



MELTON / WERRIBEE CHALLENGE

On **Sunday the 12th of November**, we will be hiking our way to Werribee for the annual Melton / Werribee Challenge match. We were hardly flushed with success last year, but hope to put up a better performance this year. If you are available on that day and interested in representing your club, just let Matt know and have your name added to the list. Transport can be provided if needed.

MEN'S WORLD CUP

During October, the **Men's World Cup** was played in **Liege, Belgium**. The tournament is restricted to 20 players, made up of regional champions, world champion, and Continental Cup qualifiers, with a limit of no more than 2 players from the same country.

Australia was represented by **David Powell**. Playing matches against much higher ranked opponents, David didn't progress past the qualifying stage, but his matches contained some fantastic rallies which were very much appreciated by the crowd.

The tournament became a vehicle for **Timo Boll** to prove that, at **36** years of age, there's still a fire in the belly. In the Quarter-Final match against **Lin Gaoyuan** from **China**, Boll came back from 3 games to 1 down to level at 3-games all. In the seventh and deciding game, he found himself behind 4-10, but won 13-11.

In the Semi Final, Boll came up against world number 1, **Ma Long**, and again came from behind to take the match 4 games to 3.

The Final was an all-German affair, with Boll matched against teammate **Dmitrij Ovtcharov**. In what started as a close encounter, Boll seemed to tire as the games wore on, and finally succumbed 4 games to 2. A great effort by Boll, and proof that age should be no barrier.

TABLE TENNIS BALLS FLYING IN THAILAND

Table tennis balls have featured in many trips to Thailand by Aussies, and our Para players came home with some heavy metal after their recent trip to New Siam.

In the Singles competitions, our congratulations go to **Sam von Einem** for taking Gold in the **Class 11 Men's**, **Rebecca Julian** for grabbing a bronze in the **Class 6-7 Women's**, and **Trevor Hirth** for a bronze in the **Class 6 Men's**.

In the Teams competition, our medal winners were **Sam von Einem** and **Rory Carroll** who grabbed a silver in the **Class 11 Men's Teams**, **Barak Mizrahi** and **Nathan Pellissier** who took a bronze in the **Class 8 Men's Teams**, and **Andrea McDonnell** who partnered with **Shiau Wen Tian** of **Chinese Taipei** for a bronze in the **Women's Class 9-10 Teams**.

Our congratulations go to the entire Aussie team, their coaches and support group.



RUNNING FOR THE QUEEN

The list of people selected to carry the baton in the **Queen's Baton Relay** for the **2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games** has been released, and some very worthy table tennis people will be involved.

From the Australian Para team mentioned in the previous article, **Andrea McDonnell, Rebecca Julian, Sam Von Einem, Rory Carroll** and **Nathan Pellissier** have all been honoured with the opportunity to carry the baton, together with Queensland para players, **Aaron Payne** and **Liam Walsh**.

Also carrying the baton from the table tennis community will be **William Henzell, Miao Miao**, and **Jian Fang Lay**.

MTTA congratulate all of these people on this achievement.

MOVE OVER, ESSENDON FOOTBALL CLUB. THIS IS GOING TO BE BIG

A report in **The Guardian** newspaper last week stated that a former doctor to the Chinese Olympic team has revealed that more than **10,000** Chinese athletes were involved in systematic doping across all sports, and that every one of China's medals in major tournaments in the 1980's and 1990's came from performance enhancing drugs.

Xue Yinxian is seeking political asylum in **Germany** and has turned whistle-blower. She has stated that children as young as *11 years old* were being introduced to the compulsory doping, and that it existed in football, athletics, swimming, volleyball, basketball, table tennis, diving, gymnastics and weightlifting. She also said that anyone who spoke against the system now sits in jail.

"At first, the youth-age group teams used the substances – the youngest were 11 years old," she said. "If you refused to dope, you had to leave the team. I couldn't do anything about it. They only approached me once there were problems. One trainer came to me and said: "Dr Xue, the boys' breasts keep getting bigger."

The article said that the claims will be investigated by the World Anti-Doping Agency's intelligence unit, however a report in the same newspaper the following day stated that WADA were first informed of these allegations by the same doctor in **2012** and have *done nothing with it since then*.

WADA pointed out that it was only formed in November 1999; and, only in January 2015, acquired the power to investigate under the 2015 Code. *"Since then, the agency has built up its intelligence and investigations capability and exercised this power as appropriate,"* a spokesperson told the Guardian. *"The same applies here – the agency will ensure that, if action is warranted and feasible under the Code, all the necessary and appropriate steps will be taken."* WADA also confirmed it would be willing to work "with or alongside" other anti-doping bodies, including the IAAF's Athletics Integrity Unit, to get to the truth of the matter.

Dr Xue has also called for "all international medals" won by her country during that period to be declared void because they are "tainted by doping". She said, *"People believed only in doping, anyone who took doping substances was seen to be defending the country."* However, the chances of any convictions are slim given the difficulty in prosecuting cases decades after the alleged offences.

QUEENS BATON RELAY

It was an interesting exercise wading through the list of **3,589** names of people who will carry the Queen's Baton in the Australian leg of the journey while it travels through every country in the Commonwealth.

The purpose of the baton is to carry a message written by the Queen from its starting point at Buckingham Palace to the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast, where the message will be removed from the baton and delivered to..... the Queen. You'd think she could have slipped it into her purse and saved everyone the trouble, wouldn't you?

But, nevertheless, I took my usual satirical glance over the list and drew the following nonsensical conclusions.

Former Australian Prime Ministers will be represented by their namesakes. In the relay, you will find **Barton, Watson, Reid, Fisher, Cook, Bruce, Lyon, Hughes, Menzies, Holt, McMahon, Fraser, Howard** and **Abbott**.

There is an **Appleby**, but not ours. There is an **Archer**, and a **Bowes**, but no Arrow. There is a **Barker**, but not ours. **Maggie Beer** is running... well, walking. There are 4 **Bell's** but only one **Bellchambers**. There are 3 **Batten's** carrying the baton, but not ours. There is a **Bligh**, but no **Christian**. There are 4 **Bond's**, none of them James. There are five **Blakes**, but not ours.

Be still, my beating heart. There is even a **Blackadder**, but I don't think it's him. There are 4 **Boyle's**, but no Lance. There is a **Cable**, but no NBN. For entertainment purposes, these is a **Morecombe** and a **Wise**. **Anthony Callea** and **Troy Cassar-Daly** will both be running and possibly singing. And if you're not interested in entertainment, **Eddie Maguire** will be there.

Swimmers old and new are in the relay. **Kate** and **Bronte Campbell** will be joining **Emily Seebohm, Libby Trickett, Tracey Wickham, Dawn Fraser, Grant Hackett, Susie O'Neill**, and possibly others I may have missed. I'm not sure they'll be running or jumping as much as **Rob DeCastella, Steve Moneghetti, Debbie Flintoff-King, Steve Hooker, Emma Carney, Cameron Ling, Adam Voges** and others, or wheeling as fast as **Kurt Fearnley**.

If anyone gets hurt and needs spare parts, there are **Chin's, Foote's, Finger's, Hart's, Limb's**, a pair of **Bristol's**, and 4 **Cox**. Representing the timber industry will be **Cedar, Blackwood, Ash, Redwood, Forrest, Wood** and **Woods**, but not ours. There is a **Day** and a **Knight**, a **Parry** and a **Thrust**, a **Rogers** and a **Rabbitt**, there are **Hill's** and **Dale's**, and a **Rose** and a **Thorn**. There is a **Payne** and a **Cutts**, but luckily there's also a **Cure**.

There will be **Walker's** running, but not ours. The automotive industry will have **Bentley's, Ford's, Holden's, Austin's, Leyland's** and **Morris's**. There will be **Masters**, but no Apprentices. There will be a **Camilleri**, but not ours. There are 28 **Smith's**, and 7 **Stewart's**, but not ours.

By profession, there are **Barber's, Baker's, Butcher's, Carpenter's, Cook's, Cooper's, Crooks', Farmer's, Fisher's, Fletcher's, Hunter's, Hooker's, Joiner's, Mason's, Miller's, Porter's, Sailor's, Shearer's, Shepherd's**, and **Usher's**. There's no-one called "Electrician", but there is a **Sparkes**.

There's even an **O'Dea**, but it's not me.

CHINA BANS JAPAN

The **Chinese Table Tennis Super League** is one of the biggest competitions in the world. Played each year in front of large crowds and broadcast live on television, teams are made up of the top Chinese players plus invited international players, meaning that the best of the best, formed into 10 teams, compete over 18 rounds and then a series of finals. At least, that's what's been happening up until now.

Japanese players **Miu Hirano** and **Kasumi Ishikawa** who were both due to play in this year's Chinese Super League competition have been told by their teams that they will not be able to compete. The CTTSL have made the decision that no foreign players will be allowed to compete in the Super League from now until after the **2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo**. The decision appears to be an effort by the Chinese to stop foreign players from gaining experience against them before the Olympics.

Surely they don't think that the Japanese will be such a threat at the next Olympics that they should stop competing against them now? Surely the greatest table tennis nation in the world shouldn't be worried about the Japanese players? Surely they should be.

Prior to the Olympics last year, the top 3 Japanese Women players, **Kasumi Ishikawa** (pictured right), **Miu Hirano** and **Mima Ito** were ranked **6th**, **16th** and **10th** in the world. Today they are **5th**, **6th**, and **7th**. And in the last Asian Championships in April, Miu Hirano beat 3 Chinese players, including World number 1, **Ding Ning**.



Prior to the Olympics last year, the top 3 Japanese Men players, **Jun Mizutani** (pictured left), **Koki Niwa** and **Tomokazu Harimoto** were ranked **6th**, **22nd** and **74th** in the world. Today they are **8th**, **9th** and **13th**, and Harimoto, at 14 years of age is proving a force to be reckoned with.

The decision of the CTTSL prevents the Chinese table tennis loving public from watching some of the best players in the world competing right in front of them. And while it might stop the Japanese players from gaining experience against the Chinese, it also stops the Chinese from learning how to handle the games of their Japanese opponents.

If China is not worried about the Japanese competing at the Olympic Games in their own back yard, they certainly should be.

SMASH DOWN BARRIERS IN 4 LANGUAGES

Smash Down Barriers is designed to improve the lives of people with disabilities through table tennis. This program, supported by the Australian government, Table Tennis Australia, and the ITTF, provides leadership and promotes social inclusion through table tennis.



The 47-page training program has now been published in **4** languages (English, Arabic, French and Spanish), and looks certain to improve many more lives around the globe.

PERFORMANCE & AGE

They say that baseball is the most statistically-driven sport in the world, and I'm not going to argue with that. Aussie Rules football seems to be getting more statistically-driven as well, with players wearing GPS tracking devices during games as well as in training. Perhaps some of them should be wearing these in their private time as well. The results could be very interesting.

I've recently been studying the lists of the **Top 100 Men** and **Top 100 Women** players in the world, and have come up with some interesting statistics of my own.

Starting with the Men's, did you know that there are **34** different countries represented amongst the Top 100 players? And that the majority of those countries are **European**? Yep. **20** European and **10** Asian. However, they have an equal number of players represented. **48** European and **48** Asian. **Japan** has the most players in the Top 100 with **18**, followed by **Korea** and **Germany** with **9** each, and then **China** with **8**.

On the matter of performance, of the 100 players there are **16** who are currently sitting on their **highest ever ranking**. There are **4** players who have achieved the Number 1 ranking. The current number 1 is **Ma Long**, and the current world numbers 3, 5 & 6 (**Xu Xin**, **Zhang Jike** & **Timo Boll**) have all been previous number 1 players. And **17** of the 100 are current or former Top 10 players.

Age is another interesting fact. The average age of the Top 100 Men is **27 years and 5 months**. There are **2** players who were born in the **1970's**, and **one** who was born in the **2000's**.

On the Women's side, there are **26** different countries represented amongst the Top 100 players. And again the majority of those countries are European with **15** compared to **8** Asian countries. The player numbers are certainly not equal on the Women's side, though. There are **63** Asian players in the Top 100 compared to **34** Europeans. As with the men, **Japan** has the most representatives with **20**, followed by **China** with **15**, **Korea** with **8** and **Hong Kong** with **6**.

Also as with the Men, there are **16** players who are currently sitting on their **highest ever ranking**. There are only **2** players in the Top 100 Women who have achieved the Number 1 ranking. The current number 1 is **Ding Ning**, and her compatriot and current number 4, **Liu Shiwen** is the other. **22** of the 100 are current or former Top 10 players.

It seems that age is no barrier for the Women players. While the average age is 2 years younger than the Men at **25 years and 5 months**, the extremes are wildly different. They start younger, with **9** of the Top 100 being born in the **2000's**. The youngest of these is the current number **99**, **Miyuu Kihara** of **Japan** who has just turned **13**. There are also **6** players who were born in the **1970's** and, surprisingly, one who was born in the **1960's**.

Current world number **63**, **Ni Xia Lian** was born in **1963** in **Shanghai**. She won gold medals in the Singles and Teams events at the **1983 World Championships**. Ni moved to **Germany** in **1989**, and later to **Luxembourg**. Representing her adopted country at **3** Olympics, Ni was the flag-bearer for Luxembourg at the **2016 Rio Olympics**.

Statistics. Gotta love 'em.

RACKETS, PADDLES AND BATS

A bat is a bat, right? It's just a piece of wood with a bit of rubber stuck on, isn't it? I mean, what else could it be?

Well actually, for a long time it could have been almost anything. The original rules of table tennis from **1926** stated that, "*The racket may be any material, size, shape or weight.*" And in the formative years of the game, this was taken to extremes.

The early packaged games from the late 1800's and early 1900's came complete with what are best described as mini-tennis racquets. These were sometimes strung like a tennis racquet, and sometimes came with stretched vellum. In **1902** there were even bats made from aluminium. What would **Dennis Lillee** think?



As you can see, there was no standard and it was up to the players to decide what suited them best. Eventually most settled on the rough design we know and love today, but that's not to say that there hasn't been change and innovation along the way. These hardwood bats (left) from **1902** show that players were already experimenting with different ways of gripping the bat to suit their particular style.

Although the basic shape had been established, the next progressions came in the bat covering. Wood, vellum, strings and aluminium were fine, but they couldn't impart the spin that players were looking for. Coverings like cork and sandpaper were applied with some success, but it was when English player **Percy Bromfield** stuck a piece of a football bladder to the face of his bat that the spin era really got started. Another unnamed player stuck a piece of the non-slip mat from the counter of his local pub onto his bat to gain extra grip. As far as the official rules go, the next alteration for bats came in **1947** when it was stated that "*The racket must not be light-coloured or brightly reflecting.*"

Then came **Hiroji Satoh**. The Japanese player made his mark in table tennis history not because of his talent, but because of his bat. Easily beaten by any of his Japanese teammates, Satoh swept all others before him at the **1952 World Championships** (including the 2 previous world champions) using his bat with a thick layer of sponge but no rubber covering.



Controversy ruled, and many called for the sponge bat to be banned, but within a few short years players had either adapted their game to compensate or had switched to using some form of sponge themselves. Hiroji Satoh slipped into obscurity.

Players soon started experimenting with combination bats, using different surfaces on each side. By “twirling” the bat, they were able to change the surface being used and change the type of shot being played. For that reason, the rule change in **1967** which required that both sides of the bat be the same colour seems rather strange.

In **1979**, the blade was allowed to contain “... reinforcing layers of fibrous material up to 15% of total thickness”, a rule which still exists today. **1981** saw the introduction of the rule stating that “*Racket covering must be of a type authorised by the ITTF.*”

The use of combination blades with different surfaces but the same colour allowed players to confuse their opponent by disguising which surface was being used. This was finally clarified in **1983** when the rule was changed to read, “*Two surfaces of racket must be of clearly different colours.*”. In **1985** this was further clarified to specify that, “*Surface of racket must be red one side and black on the other.*”

Rules on the adhesive used to attach the rubber in **1995**, and a ban on glues containing volatile organic solvents in **2007** have also been added to the list, as well as the **2008** rule stating that, “*The name of the supplier, the brand name, the ITTF logo and the ITTF number of a racket covering must be clearly visible near the edge of the striking surface.*”

But the original 1926 rules stating that any shape or size of racket is still valid, as long as the other current rules are followed. Shapes? These days you can take your pick. These new designs will push the boundaries.



If you speak to the man in the street, he’ll probably tell you that a good table tennis bat can be purchased at K-Mart for less than \$20. But we know better, don’t we?

Blades can go for all sorts of prices depending on components, weight, balance, handle, etc. Rubbers? Well we’ve spoken of that before. Remember last year when we discussed the fact that with available blades and rubbers there were well over 2 million different combinations you could choose from?

We all have preferences, but some are more popular than others. I’ve heard that players who use **Tenergy** rubbers can move faster because their wallets are so much lighter. But that’s just what I’ve heard.

Seriously? Talk to the experts who can analyse your game and offer knowledgeable advice. Just make sure that what you do complies with the rules.



NOVEMBER TOURNAMENTS

Internationally, the **World Junior Championships** will be held in **Riva del Garda, Italy**, from the **26th of November** to the **3rd of December**. Most competitors will be using this as a warm-up event in preparation for next year's World Junior Championship in Bendigo.

Locally, the **Kilsyth Senior & Junior Open** will be held on **Saturday the 11th**, and the weekend of the **25th & 26th** will see the running of the **Albury/Wodonga Veteran Open**. This will be the Vet's last hit before they have some quiet nap time over the summer.

ON THE WEB

If you enjoy watching the table tennis highlights on the web, a great place to go is www.pingsunday.com. Coach **EmRatThich** puts up regular articles, blogs and video's which are always worth a look.

And why does he call it pingsunday? Guess what day he puts up new training video's?

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