



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

November 2018

Edition 50

50th EDITION, LOOKING FORWARD TO CELEBRATING, GAME THEORY, SMASHES, AND MUCH MORE

YES !!! We made it to fifty! No looking back just yet. Always moving forward. In this edition we look at what's happening for the rest of the year, get game on game theory, talk up our chances of world championships, look at what a big club looks like, and have a smashing time talking about smashing.

THE TAIL END OF THE YEAR APPROACHES

We are approaching the pointy end of proceedings for our Summer Season. With only a few rounds to go, we'll be in to the finals before you know it, and the field is still wide open. The finals will get underway on the **22nd of November**, with the Grand Finals being held on the **29th**.

We are still waiting on conformation of the date for the **Melton – Werribee Challenge** match. We've been getting a bit of a pasting in recent years, so it'll be interesting to see how much we've improved. We'll let you know when it is as soon as we find out.

END OF YEAR CELEBRATIONS

As has been the case for the past few years, our end of year knees-up will be held at **Q-Lounge in Melton**. This year's event will be held on **Thursday the 13th of December**, and will kick off at around **7:00pm**. Over 100 trophies will be presented on the night to some very deserving players.



Again this year, we have organised a guest speaker to inform, amuse, and motivate you. Without giving too much away, we can tell you that our guest this year has been to **Commonwealth** and **Olympic Games**, and not just as a spectator. I'm sure we'll see many milling around our guest for a photo or an autograph.

Tickets are a very reasonable **\$20** which includes your meal. Drinks are available at bar prices. Bring along your friends as well. It'll be a great night. You can start registering your interest on the forms at the front desk on any Thursday night.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO XUE YINXIAN?

In the **November 2017** edition of *Across The Net*, I reported that a former Chinese Olympic Team doctor was seeking political asylum in Germany and was turning whistle-blower on systematic doping amongst the Chinese Olympic teams during the 1980's and 1990's.

The report was published in several newspapers around the world including **The Guardian** in the U.K. **Xue Yinxian** had revealed that more than **10,000** Chinese athletes across all sports were involved in doping, and that every Chinese medal during that period was won by an athlete taking performance enhancing drugs. She stated that children as young as eleven were involved in compulsory doping, and anyone who refused was forced off the team.

The article stated that the **World Anti-Doping Agency** would be investigating the claims, and Xue said that she would be willing to speak to the **IOC** regarding the matter.

That was 12 months ago. And what has happened in the meantime? Nothing. I have been unable to find and further information about the investigation or about Xue Yinxian. The most recent articles which include her name are the one's I reported on in November last year.

Was she granted political asylum in Germany or any other country? Was she repatriated to China? Were the claims ever investigated? Or was the whole matter simply swept under the carpet?

THE QUESTION WE SHOULD ALL ASK

I recently read an article where table tennis was described in terms of mathematical game theory as

$$P_n[P(x) \leq b] = P_n[1 - F(x) \leq b] = P_n[F(x) \geq 1 - b] = P_n[X \geq F^{-1}(1 - b)] = 1 - F[F^{-1}(1 - b)] = 1 - F[F^{-1}(1 - b)] = 1 - (1 - b) = b$$

And, you have to admit, it's hard to argue with that.

But what does it really mean? What are they trying to say? What they are describing is the theory that, rather than attacking every ball, you are better off using the theory of "**minimax**".

Simply speaking, it means that, for every shot you should ask yourself the following:-

- 1/ Can I hit a definite winner with this shot? If "**Yes**", then go for it. If "**No**", then go to question 2.
- 2/ What is the best shot I can play to minimise my opponent's chance of taking the advantage in the point?

For those of us who like to attack all the time, this is a hard pill to swallow. The overriding instinct for some of us is to constantly play an attacking shot, even if the odds of success are not great. Those that follow the "**minimax**" system are more inclined to wait for their opportunity before going for the kill shot.

So settle down and think about the situation in the game. Consider your options and try to make the best choice. Sometimes the best form of attack is not attack.

Patience is a virtue.

AUSTRALIA BIDDING FOR 2021 WORLDS

Did you know that Melbourne was selected as the host city for the **1967 Table Tennis World Championships**? It never happened, though. We were too honest.

After being awarded the rights to hold the championships, which would have been held at the old **Albert Park Table Tennis Stadium**, the Australian Government informed the ITTF that they would deny entry visa's to any player from **North Vietnam** due to the Vietnam war. The ITTF responded by removing the rights from Melbourne and handing them instead to **Stockholm, Sweden**.

Well, we now have a shot at redemption. Australia is one of eight countries vying for the rights to host the **2021 ITTF Table Tennis World Championships**. Our competitors in this race are **Chile, Germany, Morocco, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Tunisia** and the **United States of America**.

Only one of these countries has previously hosted the championships. Germany has had them seven times; **Berlin** in **1930**, **Dortmund** in **1959, 1989** and **2012**, **Munich** in **1969**, **Bremen** in **2006**, and **Dusseldorf** in **2017**. With the ITTF desperately trying to expand into new territories, I don't see Germany getting a look in. All of the other countries have a chance, but let's not forget that on only one previous occasion have the Championships been held outside Europe and Asia, and they have *never* been held in the Southern Hemisphere. Does this put Australia and Chile in the box seat?

Chile has also declared their interest in the **2022 World Team Championships**, together with **Germany, Morocco, Puerto Rico** and **Tunisia, China, Japan, Portugal, Romania, and Spain**.

And if it comes to Australia, where better to hold it than **Melbourne**? With packed stands for the World Tour Australian Open event in July, we must have proved our interest in table tennis, and we are known around the globe as the sporting capital of the world. We've hosted Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games. Hell, if we can get **75,000** people to a **WWE** wrestling match, imagine what we could do for a *real* sporting event.

Bidding closes on the **31st of December**, and the ITTF selection panel will visit and inspect those cities during January and February next year. The final decision will be announced in April next year. We could be in with a chance.

AUSSIE ELECTED TO ITTF ATHLETES COMMISSION

Our congratulations go to **Trevor Hirth** who is one of two Para athletes recently elected to the ITTF Athletes Commission. Trevor was elected as a representative for Standing Para players, while **Alena Kanova** from **Slovakia** was elected as the representative for Wheelchair Para players.

The join **Jean-Michel Saive** (Belgium), **Galia Dvorak** (Spain), **Marcos Madrid** (Mexico), **Wang Liqin** (China), and **Zoran Primorac** (Croatia) who were elected earlier in the year. These athletes will serve a term of four years.

The mission of the Athletes Commission is to represent the views of the athletes and make their voice heard within the ITTF.

We wish Trevor and the other members all the best for their work on the committee.

SMALL FISH IN A SMALL POND

I keep on saying that **Melton Table Tennis** is a small club. It's true when you compare us on the scale of the number of players or the amount of playing time we have. Our standard of play is certainly improving, we're getting bigger in numbers and, hopefully in the not too distant future, we can be open for more hours each week. But what does a big club look like?

Locally, you would be looking at a club like **Croydon**. With more than **20** tables, open for nearly **50 hours** each week, and with over **500** members, they are certainly the biggest club in Victoria, and possibly the biggest in Australia. But even this pales in comparison to what's happening overseas.

Although by no means the biggest in the world, one of the most successful table tennis clubs in Europe is **Borussia Dusseldorf**. Fielding teams in the top line German competition, the **Table Tennis Bundesliga**, since 1967, it is the only club to have never been eliminated from the competition. In fact, they have won **30 German Championships**. They also play with great success in the **European Champions League**.

When you win championships, you tend to attract good players and talented juniors. The list of Borussia Dusseldorf's past and present players would leave many table tennis fans picking up their jaw from the ground. How about **Eberhard Scholer**, **Jorge Roskopf** (current German Head Coach), **Jorgen Persson**, **Vladimir Samsonov**, **Michael Maze**, **Timo Boll**, **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**, **Patrick Baum**, **Patrick Franziska**, **Kristian Karlson**, and **Anton Kallberg**.

With other professional teams playing in top leagues throughout Germany and Europe, including a team for wheelchair athletes and one for standing para players, they have the top level well covered. Their main stadium court can hold several hundred spectators, and tickets for the European Championship matches there can go for up to **€53** (au\$86).

Each year they run a Junior tournament. This would be a sight to see. Attracting over **1,500** players, it is played in their main hall on more than eighty tables. Yes, that's right. **80**.

The club runs a table tennis school, available for players of any level to attend, with courses running for up to weeks at a time.



Obviously, they have a staff of professionals to cater for this, as well as a fully equipped gymnasium to help their athletes get the best out of themselves. And speaking of catering, they also have a fully professional kitchen to make sure that the athletes and trainees are eating properly.

And what else could you need to run a successful club and training facility? Well, how about a **40-room hotel**, owned and run by the club, as part of the complex? Open to general travellers as well as table tennis people, this is the perfect place to stay while you do the 5-hours-per-day of training at the table tennis school. The kitchen also deals with the restaurant attached to the hotel.

So when I say we're a small club, yeah... we're a small club.

SMASHING COMPARISONS

At Melton Table Tennis, there are an increasing number of members who also play tennis. The games share a lot in common. Table tennis derived from lawn tennis, and early packaged sets were made to look like a lawn tennis court had been set up on your dining room table. These sets came complete with mini “tennis racquets” to make the game more authentic.



And the cross-overs continue. Both games share styles of play as well. But while there seems to be a large majority of tennis players staying at the baseline, waiting for their opponent to make a mistake gifting them the point, this style of play is far less common in table tennis. Of all racquet sports, table tennis is certainly one of the most aggressive and attacking. And certainly, table tennis requires much faster reflexes with much less reaction time than its big brother. Let me explain.

Australian tennis player, **Sam Groth** holds the record for the world’s fastest tennis serve at over **260 kmh**. It seems in tennis that the speed of the serve is all important, as they have a display of the speed on the scoreboards at major tournaments. In table tennis, much less reliance is put on the speed of the serve. Placement and spin are far more important criteria and are used to set up and control the rally. But both sports utilise the smash during normal play. So is there any way to compare them? You betcha.

In normal play a tennis forehand smash from a top player has a speed approaching **160 kmh**. Wow. That’s fast. The smash by a good table tennis player will get to a speed of over **100 kmh**. That’s a big difference, but the table tennis ball would still get a speeding ticket on most Victorian roads.

But what about the question of distance and reaction time? The tennis court is **23.77 metres** from baseline to baseline. The table tennis table is **2.74 metres** from end to end. For the tennis ball to go baseline to baseline at **160 kmh**, it would take **0.53 seconds**. This gives the tennis player just on half a second to prepare for and play a shot. A table tennis smash at **100 kmh** will travel from end to end of the table in **0.09 seconds**. Five times quicker, and only one-fifth of the reaction time.

But, you might say, most players don’t stand right at the edge of the table. So how far back would you need to be to get the same reaction time that a tennis player gets? **13 metres**. Look at the table in the court behind you. Now go and stand at the other end of that. That’s about 13 metres.

But, you may argue, the table tennis ball slows down in flight. How true. And so will the tennis ball which will slow at different rates depending on how new it is and the amount of fur on the ball. You would also need to consider the displacement of the tennis ball as it compressed and decompresses during flight. The calculation to work this out is:-

$$v = \sqrt{(v_h)^2 + (v_v)^2}$$

When you work out the answer, let me know.

So let’s look at it the other way. For a tennis player to get the same reaction time as a table tennis player, they would need to stand on the service line when the ball was being smashed from the baseline. *That’s the service line at the same end of the court.* Just over **5 metres away**.



And they say that table tennis is only a game. *Yeah, right.....*

NOVEMBER TOURNAMENTS

There's nothing scheduled internationally for November, but I'm going to skip ahead and mention something for early December. From the **2nd** to the **9th** of **December**, the **ITTF World Junior Championships** will be held in **Bendigo**. It's not too far to drive up and watch some of the best junior players in the world competing in our own backyard.

Locally for November, the **Werribee Senior and Junior Open** will be held on the **3rd of November**. Balls will be flying at Eagles Stadium (see what I did there?), so it would be worth the drive to compete or just to spectate.

On the **17th** and **18th** of **November**, **Albury/Wodonga** will be holding their **Veterans Open**. This will be the last hit for the Vets before they have a nice, quiet lie down over summer.

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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