



# **ACROSS THE NET**

## **Melton Table Tennis**

**August 2019**

**Edition 54**

### **WE'RE BACK**

Hi. It's been a while. Have you missed me? I'm fine, thanks. Actually, I've never been better. There's been a lot happening since the March edition. So settle in. We've got a lot to talk about.

### **A BRIEF RUNDOWN OF RECENT HISTORY**

Most of you know what has been happening to the club and some of its members, so please feel free to skip this section while I explain to those who weren't aware what has been going on.

To say I owe my life to the club is no longer an exaggeration. I will be forever grateful to everyone who helped in any way to get my heart beating again and doing what had to be done to get me the help I needed. My collapse was caused by a blocked artery and, while in hospital they also discovered that a valve in my heart was only working at 30% of capacity. I can inform you that open heart surgery is a method of losing weight rapidly, but not one I would recommend.

I wasn't alone in medical fights during this year, either. **Andy Stewart** has been away from the tables for much of the year while he went through regular chemo treatments. I am thrilled to say that Andy has had much success with the treatments and is getting back to match fitness. A true stalwart, Andy still made regular appearances at the club during his battle, and it was always good to see his smiling face.

Did anything else happen over the past few months? Read on, my friends, read on.

### **WHERE WE WERE, WHERE WE'RE AT, AND WHERE WE'RE GOING**

As most of you probably know by now, we are no longer tenants of the Al Iman College Multi-purpose venue, a place we've called home for close to 20 years. No need for recriminations. The fact is we're no longer there. But we need to discuss what got us to this point, and to let you all know what work has been done to keep the club going.

Originally built as part of the Victoria University complex, the gym was taken over a few years ago by the **Al Iman Muslim College** who, while allowing us to still use the hall for our play on Thursday nights, utilised the rooms at the front as their prayer rooms.

Because of the tragic events in **Christchurch, New Zealand** in March, the administration of the college decided that, for our safety, they would suspend all activities in the hall "until further notice". After several unsuccessful attempts to get a more definite timeframe on this, the MTTA committee started looking for

alternative venues. Facilities all around Melton, Bacchus Marsh, and Rockbank areas were being contacted to see if they had the space and time to accommodate a table tennis club. Meetings were arranged, proposals were drawn up. And time after time we got the same answer. *Sorry, we are full with basketball.*

Everywhere we tried with a space big enough to fit us in on a single night was already taken up with basketball. We looked for smaller venues, even willing to split the competition nights into two if we could arrange a smaller venue, but all to no avail. The main problem we had with smaller venues was storage space. They may have had a playing area for a few tables, but didn't have the space to store them for the rest of the time.

**Table Tennis Victoria** were contacted, and were able to offer some help and assistance, and offered suggestions for venues, none of which were available to us. The observation made by TTV staff was that everywhere they looked, the halls were being used for basketball. We were offered the use of tables at **Sunshine Table Tennis** and at **LOOPS** in West Sunshine, however our obvious choice was to find a venue around Melton. Our local state MP, **Steve McGhie** was contacted and was able to assist in getting **RecWest** to investigate venues on our behalf, but you'll never guess what they found... basketball.

And then, this. At a committee meeting in April, it was brought to our attention that the **Melton Basketball** club had a front page story printed in the **Star** newspaper, complaining that the six-court indoor basketball facility being built for them was too small. To rub salt into the wound, later that same night I discovered a social media message from the president of the **Kuranjang Tennis Club** thanking the **Melton City Council** for their grant of **\$710,000** to upgrade their facilities.

Immediately after reading that, I organised a meeting with **Bob Turner, Mayor of Melton** and **Troy Scoble (Recreation and Youth)** explaining our situation and pointing out the amount of money being spent on other sports while our club was on the brink of collapse due to not being able to find a playing space. It took *11 weeks*, but Melton Council are now actively trying to assist us in the search for a new home and, although not in writing, have told me that we *will* have space provided in the new *multi-sports facility* which will soon be under construction.

We have not yet finished our search, and now have sporting groups, recreation organization experts, and politicians, both local and state, interested in our cause. We will prevail.

In the meantime, **Squash Logic in Melton** have been good enough to allow us to use their courts on Tuesday nights to keep our club alive. We had originally been in discussion with **Richard** and **Karen** about using a couple of their courts to allow us to run formal coaching classes on Tuesday nights while still playing pennant at the hall on Thursday nights, however when we got booted, they offered us the chance to move in for our pennant play.

This meant moving from Thursday nights to Tuesday nights with a lesser number of tables available. It certainly limits our growth capacity, but the alternative was to close the club until we could find something else.

So our thanks go to Richard and Karen at Squash Logic who have, by default, become part of the Melton Table Tennis family.

## **CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS ARE HERE**

Our thoughts should now turn to the annual **Club Championships** which start this week. Some players choose not to attend these nights, thinking that they're not good enough to challenge for the honours. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Club Championships are designed to provide a level playing field for all club members.

We invite you to attend one, two or all three of these nights. From the top of the player list to the bottom, everyone has a chance at winning an award. And apart from all that, it's another opportunity to play.

**Week 1** on the **30<sup>th</sup> of July** is the **Handicap Championship**. This is a prestigious event in our club calendar with many considering this to be the best trophy to win. This is because you are not only battling people in your own grade level, but players from other grades on a level playing field. With the Andy Stewart Handicap Trophy up for grabs, the competition is sure to be intense.

In **Week 2**, on the **6<sup>th</sup> of August**, we run the **Doubles Championship** and the **Shootout**. This is always a fun night, and it is a proven fact that anything can happen in the Shootout.

**Week 3** on the **13<sup>th</sup> of August** is the club **Singles Championship** for A Grade, B Grade and C Grade. This is your chance to go head to head with those of a similar level to yourself.

The Club Championships are open to **all MTTA members** who have played at least 3 rounds in the grade and have paid all appropriate fees. All players are given the best opportunity to take out one of the 10 awards on offer. Don't miss this chance to stretch your abilities and have some fun.

## **ANOTHER BARAK IS GONE**

What level do you need to achieve to be considered a good player? A-Grade at your club is good. Taking out a Leading Player award is good. Representing your state is very good.

So how good would you consider someone who is a 6-times Australian Champion in his class, has amassed 15 gold medals at National Para Championships, is an Oceania Champion, and has represented Australia at Commonwealth Games, World Para Championships and Paralympic Games? **Barak Mizrachi** has done all that, and more.

And after 2 decades dedicated to the sport, Barak has made the decision to retire from international competition. Having also served at an administration level for TTV, his commitment to table tennis has been outstanding.



Last week I bumped in to Barak in a chilly Port Melbourne car park. As an indication of our differing lifestyles, I was coming from my favourite coffee shop, and Barak was on his way to the gym. We briefly discussed his retirement and his future prospects. Barak mentioned that he would be moving overseas.

Now, I know you're a Carlton supporter, Barak, but isn't that taking things a bit too far? Anyway, everyone at MTTA wishes you all the best for your future endeavours.

## WINTER IS DONE

It's a well-known fact that things shrink in the cold (*that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it*). So it was with our Winter season this year. Due to our unforeseen temporary closure and re-location, our normal 10-week winter season was shortened to a 5-week quickie.

**A1 Grade** saw **Connor Ziday, Toby Dinh, and Chris Busuttill** filling in for **Matt Magro** beating **Michael Louey, Chris Blake, and Steve Jaunkalns**, 5 matches to 3.

**A2 Grade** saw **Graham Huggett, Sarah Lappin** and **Ryan Dickie** triumphing over **Leki Fifita, Sharyn Ciberlin & Steve Batten** filling in for **Jim Scott** by 6 matches to 1.

**B Grade** saw **Garry Mamouney, Annemarie Rothwell** and **Dave Ryan** taking the honours over **Jack Jensen, Adam Farmer, and Josiah Rasenberger** by 6 matches to 3.

In **C Grade** it was chocolates for **Allan Pearson, Bugsy Pearson** and **Sarah Lappin** filling in for **Peter Wjodacyzk**, and boiled lollies for **Phill Jenkins, Jan Ryan, and John Batty** filling in for **Anthony** by 6 matches to 5.

The Leading Player for the season in **A1 Grade** was **Matt Camilleri** in a very close contest from Michael Louey. Matt went through the season undefeated. **Graham Huggett** won the **A2 Grade** Leading Player, in a countback from Brett Woods. **Garry Mamouney** went undefeated to take out the **B Grade** Leading Player from George Jensen.

In an amazing 4-way tie, **C Grade** finished with **Sarah Lappin** taking the Leading Player in a countback from Allan Pearson, Russell Mackay and Jason Craddock. Only 1 game separated the 4 players over the season.

## PLAYING TO WIN VS PLAYING TO NOT LOSE

It's a race to 11 points, isn't it? It's as simple as that, isn't it? It's just bat on ball until the point is over, isn't it? No, it's not. There is far more played out in the mind between and during points than ever goes on with the bat. So what do you think about in a game? Are you the type of person who plays to win, or are you desperately trying not to lose?

Yes, it makes a big difference. Are you trying to defeat your opponent, or are you battling against that little devil on your shoulder that keeps on shouting, "Don't attack! Just hold on to your lead!"

American coach, **Samson Dubina** teaches his students to think a different way. He gets them to think of how they normally play a game, and then work out how an opponent could defeat them. They then have a basis to design defences to prevent that from happening.

This encourages the students to think about the game from their opponent's point of view and to re-develop a style to counteract, and to prepare for what the other player is likely to do.

Unfortunately, he has called this tactic "**How to Beat Yourself**".



**Table Tennis Australia** has announced that it is considering being part of a formal bid to host the **2023 ITTF World Championships** in Australia. I've written about Australia and these championships before. Here's an article from the **June 2015** edition of *Across the Net*.

**WE NEARLY HAD IT HERE**

The awarding of a World Championship to a city is not a task that the ITTF take lightly. In a fashion similar to the awarding of an Olympic Games by the IOC, many factors need to be considered. It's not just a matter of how good the host country is at table tennis, but also the projected audience and the influence the championship will have on table tennis in that country and the region.

In 1961, the ITTF granted **Melbourne** the option to hold the **1967 World Table Tennis Championships**, and this was confirmed in 1965. In an era before Jeff's Shed and the Rod Laver Arena, the venue for matches was going to be the old *Albert Park Table Tennis Centre*.

The photo's below show the **Albert Park Table Tennis Centre** in 1960. They were on postcards sent from **Ron Jones**, then President of the *Australian Table Tennis Association*, to **Ivor Montagu**, president of the ITTF.



TABLE TENNIS CENTRE OF VICTORIA  
IN ALBERT PARK, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA. SOME OF THE 41 TABLES

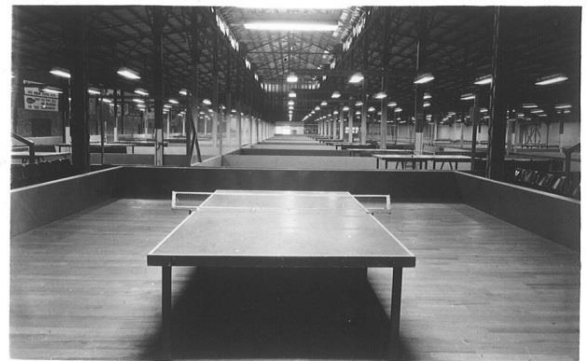
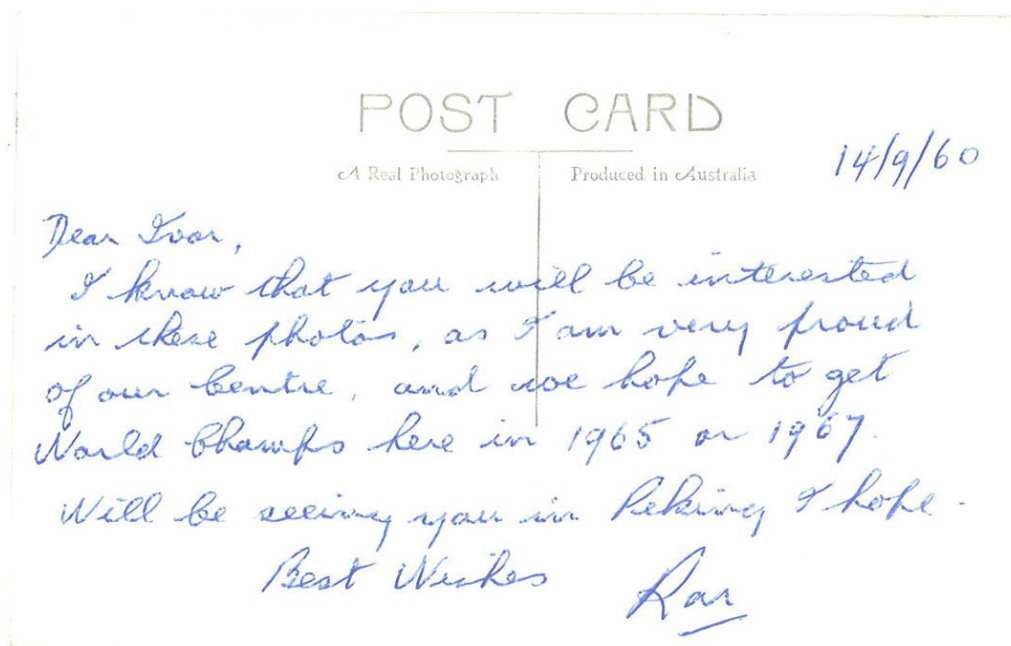


TABLE TENNIS CENTRE OF VICTORIA  
IN ALBERT PARK, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA. VIEW FROM THE CENTRE COURT



The card reads :

*Dear Ivor, I know that you will be interested in these photos, as I am very proud of our Centre, and we hope to get World Champs here in 1965 or 1967. Will be seeing you in Peking, I hope. Best Wishes, Ron*

Although details of the plans for the event are sketchy at best, the preparations had gone to the stage where manufacturers were asked to submit samples of commemorative souvenirs to the organising committee. One such item was a commemorative ashtray which was manufactured by **Stokes A/Asia**. Originally founded by **Thomas Stokes** in 1856, Stokes were electroplaters and diecasters who manufactured (among other things) the gas-lamps used in the Victorian Parliament building, and the original "Rising Sun" badge worn by the Australian Army. Stokes are still in business today and are based in Ringwood. The photos below are of this ashtray and were found in the archives of the ITTF Museum. The inscription around the side says "**29<sup>th</sup> World Table Tennis Championships Melbourne 1967 Australia**".



Unfortunately, this was the time of the Vietnam War, and the Australian government stated that it would refuse a visa to any participants from **North Vietnam**. In 1966, the ITTF reacted by withdrawing the offer from Melbourne and instead granted the 1967 World Championships to **Stockholm, Sweden**.

Due to the *Cultural Revolution* which was taking place at the time, **China** did not compete in the 1967 World Championships, leaving the way clear for **Japan** to dominate with **Nobuhiko Hasegawa** beating **Mitsuru Kohno** in the *Men's Singles*, and **Sachiko Morisawa** beating **Naoko Fukazu** in the *Women's Singles*. Japan also took Gold and Silver in both the *Women's Doubles* and *Mixed Doubles*, and Gold in the *Team's* event.

The **Indian Table Tennis Federation** learnt from Australia's mistake. While the Australian Table Tennis Association made it known to the Federal Government that North Vietnamese players would be invited, at the **1975** World Championships in **Calcutta, India**, both the **South African** and **Israeli** teams were invited by the Indian Table Tennis Federation without any notification to the Indian government. When these players arrived at Bombay airport, the Indian government refused them entry and bundled them back onto planes to their home countries. This earned the Indian Table Tennis Federation a censure from the ITTF, but allowed the championships to go on.

***The ITTF World Championships have never been held in the Southern hemisphere.*** We can only imagine how different table tennis in Australia would be today if the championships had been held here.

I am grateful for the assistance of **Mr. Chuck Hoey**, Curator of the **I.T.T.F. Museum** in **Lausanne, Switzerland** for his assistance in providing information for this article. All photographs appear courtesy of the ITTF Museum ([www.ittf.com/museum](http://www.ittf.com/museum)).

## **MULTI-TALENTED MONTAGU**

Every now and again we need to remind ourselves that the game we play very nearly faded into obscurity before it had a chance to be popular.

Starting as a form of “indoor lawn tennis”, the game turned into a fad which lasted from the late 1880’s to around 1910 before falling out of fashion. There were only a handful of enthusiasts who kept playing the game, with each group having their own set of rules and scoring system. One of these enthusiasts was **Ivor Montagu**. And it was surprising that Ivor had any time at all for table tennis.

Ivor’s grandfather, **Samuel Montagu**, founded the bank of **Samuel Montagu & Co.**, and served in the House of Commons. In 1907, **King Edward VII** made him baron of the Southampton suburb of Swaythling, a hereditary title that he would pass down to Ivor’s father, **Louis**.

**Ivor Goldsmid Samuel Montagu** was born in April, 1904 into tremendous wealth at the family’s Kensington mansion. The youngest of three children, Ivor grew up with interests in zoology, filmmaking and politics. Attending **Westminster School**, the **Royal College of Science**, and **Kings College, Cambridge**, he obtained a Masters in Zoology, but was already making his mark in his other areas of interest.



He joined both the **British Socialist Party** and the **Fabian Society** at the age of **14**, the **Young Communist League** by the time he was **17**, and later the **Communist Party**, to which he belonged all his life.

Taking up work as a zoologist for the **British Museum** he also became an active member of the **Labour Party**. He visited the **Soviet Union** in **1925** as a zoologist on behalf of the British Museum and began to actively promote British-Soviet friendship. His passion for wildlife conservation was never extinguished, and he was a council member of the **Fauna Preservation Society** for several years. He was friends with the eminent Soviet conservationist and zoologist **Prof. Andrei Bannikov**, had contacts in Mongolia, and was a champion for the conservation of the endangered **Przewalski's horse**.

His marriage in **1927** to a commoner caused scandal amongst his family and throughout London’s society, and was reported in the papers with the statement :- *London is agog at the elopement of Ivor Montagu, aged 22, the youngest son of Lord Swaythling. The young son of Lord Swaythling was married secretly yesterday at the Registry Office to Miss Eileen Hellstern. Miss Hellstern is a typist and the daughter of a shoemaker.*

Ivor’s mother, Gladys, received dozens of condolence notes, including one from her close friend, **the Queen of England**, Mary (known to us as the Queen Mother). *“Gladys, I feel for you,”* the Queen wrote to Ivor’s mother.

Eileen Hellstern was a Jewish divorced mother of one who went by the nickname of “Hell”. Their marriage was seen by Ivor’s father as *“an irredeemable calamity”*, and he was so furious with his son that he changed his will, reducing Ivor’s inheritance by three-fifths. Although the parents quickly began to warm up to Eileen, Louis died shortly thereafter and didn’t have the opportunity to restore his will.

Ivor Montagu's career in film would alone be enough to earn him high praise. His first films as director were *Bluebottles* (1928), *Daydreams* (1929) and *The Tonic* (1930), all short silent comedies starring **Elsa Lanchester** and **Charles Laughton** in their earliest screen roles. These films were developed from short stories written by his good friend **H.G. Wells**. A contemporary and friend of **Charlie Chaplin**, Ivor was also an associate producer on four **Alfred Hitchcock** films: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1935), *The Secret Agent* and *Sabotage* (1936). With his language skills, he also translated novels and plays from French, German and Russian into English.

Ivor's eldest brother, **Ewen** was a strait-laced barrister in civilian life, but became a Naval Intelligence Officer in **MI-6** during the Second World War. He was the mastermind of the successful deception that launched the invasion of Sicily, **Operation Mincemeat**. He later wrote a best-selling account of that adventure, *The Man Who Never Was*.

Ivor Montagu himself turned out to be working, albeit briefly, for the other side. A **July 1940** cable from the **Soviet Military Attaché** in London identified him as the new recruit (codename: *Intelligentsia*) who was supposed to create a group of like-minded friends to pass military secrets to the Soviets. By the following year, Germany had invaded Russia and the Soviet Union became an ally of Britain's, so that by **June 1941**, both brothers were technically working for the same side, although neither knew of the other's role.

Counter-espionage agents at **MI-5** seem to have suspected Ivor because of his outspoken Communist politics, his hanging around with scruffy Russians and housing a Jewish refugee in his house. But, by far the greatest suspicions were aroused by Ivor's passionate support of international table tennis, which seemed so eccentric to MI-5 that they assumed it had to be a cover for something else. They even tapped his phone and opened his mail, creating three volumes on him by early 1942, but found nothing specific.

And yet, amongst all of these activities, Ivor Montagu still found the time to devote to table tennis. Frustrated by the fractured rules being used by different clubs around the country, he wrote and codified the first "**Rules of Table Tennis**". In 1926 he personally provided the funding for the first world championships, and his family provided the championship trophy, still to this day called the **Swathyling Cup**.

At the age of 18 he originally formed the "**English Ping Pong Association**", however at one of their committee meetings they were approached by solicitors from **Parker Brothers** who owned the "ping pong" brand name.



**Ivor Montagu (Centre) with the English team from 1928**

The solicitors insisted that Parker Brothers be paid royalties for the use of the ping pong name. Montagu immediately stood and dissolved the "English Ping Pong Association", and invited any interested parties to meet in an adjoining room to form the "**English Table Tennis Association**".

Ivor had a similar stroke of genius and quick-thinking, when intending to hold the European Table Tennis Championships in London in 1926. **Eight** Indian students who were studying in London requested permission to play. Realising an opportunity, he immediately re-badged the event as the **International Table Tennis Championship**.



Having formed the **English Table Tennis Association** and the **International Table Tennis Federation**, he served as ITTF president from 1926 to 1967, and as chairman of the ETTA from 1923 to 1929, from 1932 to 1933, and again from 1936 to 1958. He was also the ETTA's president from 1927 to 1931 and 1958 to 1966.

In his leadership role at the ITTF, Ivor made efforts to connect with **China**, which was then isolated from much of the West. In **1951**, Ivor invited China to join the group and compete in its world championships, a significant gesture since the country was a member in only two other international sports organizations and would not join the United Nations for another 20 years.

Montagu wrote many pamphlets and books, such as *Film World* (1964), *With Eisenstein in Hollywood* (1968), and *The Youngest Son* (1970). He wrote two books about table tennis: *Table Tennis Today* (1924) and *Table Tennis* (1936). He was awarded the **Lenin Peace Prize** in **1959** and was inducted into the **ITTF Hall of Fame** in **1995**.

With distinguished careers in politics, cinema, zoology and table tennis, Ivor Montagu passed away in November 1984, just a matter of weeks after the passing of Hell, his wife of 58 years.

### IS THIS YOU?



### **OUR NEW WEBSITE**

I am pleased to announce that the Melton Table Tennis website has been completely re-designed and re-written by **Dean Camilleri**.

Deano has been working on this for a number of months, and the site now has many more features, much more security, and a much better chance of keeping up with the ever-increasing pace of technology.

The address is the same. You can still find it at [www.meltontabletennis.com.au](http://www.meltontabletennis.com.au)

Our thanks go to Dean for his efforts.

### **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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