



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

March 2020

Edition 55

NEWSLETTER IS BACK AGAIN... AT LEAST FOR A WHILE

Wow. So much has happened I'm not sure where to start. Writing this newsletter is a time-consuming task, but one which I enjoy. So after a considerable break, I'm back at the reporting desk to give it another go. It may not come out quite as frequently as before, but I'll try to keep up with the news around the club and around the wider table tennis community. Buckle up. It's going to be a bumpy ride.

COVID-19 UPDATE

With the unprecedented events taking place, the committee of MTTA have had to make some tough decisions. It is after much discussion and debate that it has been decided to ***postpone the Winter competitions at both Melton and Caroline Springs, and temporarily close the club.***

This decision has been made in the interests of the health of members and had not been taken lightly. The closure is for a period of **4 weeks** initially, and will be monitored by the committee and reviewed at that time. Any updates will be provided via our website and by SMS whenever necessary.

Melton Table Tennis are not taking this stand alone, with many other clubs in Victoria and interstate also closing for a period of time as well.

We urge all members to take the utmost care at this time. Your personal health is much more important than a game, and we want to see all of you safe and well when we eventually come out of this crisis.



JOHN ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Most of you would know **John Weightman**, either from his current play in our Caroline Springs pennant, or from previous pennants at our old venue.

Unfortunately, John suffered a health scare while playing at the Sunshine club earlier this month and has been spending time in the Royal Melbourne hospital since.

We wish John a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing him around the club when he's well enough to make it.

SUMMER SEASONS WRAP-UP

The 2020 Summer season at MTTA has certainly been different. For the first time, we have celebrated Grand Finals in 2 locations. Although not the huge number of players we had a year ago, the club is building and expanding into new territory with new names appearing on the trophies.

At the Tuesday pennant in Melton, the A-Grade competition was won by **Chris Blake, Connor Ziday** and **Chris Busittil** who beat **Matt Camilleri, Matt Magro** and **Ryan Dickie**.

In B-Grade at Melton, **Geof Walker, John Bennett** and **Ross Lappin** took down **Adam Farmer, Anna-Marie Jurkovic** and **Sarah Lappin**.

In C-Grade at Melton, **Bailey Hermit** and **Michael Costantinou** defeated **Jason Craddock** and **Anthony O'Sullivan**.

In the Thursday competition at Caroline Springs, the A-Grade Grand Final was won by **Jack Bouchaud, Aaron Spiteri** and **Daniel Roberts** who defeated **Matt Camilleri, Zoltan Gyuricza** and **Mina Gerguis**.

In the B-Grade at Caroline Springs, **Josh Dias, Michael Costantinou**, and **George Yanna**, filling in for **Annemarie Rothwell** defeated **Geof Walker, Will Corluka** and **Angela Cricchiola**.

The list of Leading Players for the Summer season features a few names new to the top award. At Melton, the A-Grade leading player was **Matt Camilleri**. **Adam Farmer** took out the B-Grade Leading Player, and **Josiah Rasenberger** was the C-Grade Leading Player for the Summer season.

Leading Players at Caroline Springs were **Phill Websdale** in A-Grade, and **Dillon Ziday** in B-Grade.

We congratulate all of the winners.

2020 CLUB FEES

The playing fees charged by **MTTA** for **2020** have not changed, however we have moved with the times in the way they are paid.

Running a club, even a relatively small club like ours is not cheap. Venue hire alone will cost the club over **\$15,000** each year. Add to that the purchase of tables, nets, scorecards, trophies, and the whole exercise is close to the Gross Domestic Product of a small island nation. We rely on having members helping us meet these commitments by paying their match fees when they are due. MTTA doesn't charge a club membership fee, so the costs to members is kept at the minimum amount required to keep us going.

Rather than being reliant on cash, fees for each season can now be paid by **direct bank transfer**, or by **EFTPOS** at the club. MTTA is, as far as our research shows, one of the first table tennis clubs in Australia to make use of technology which can take EFTPOS payments via a reader on a mobile phone. We have these in place at both venues in 2020.



Playing fees will vary based on the length of the season, however it averages out to about **\$8 per night** for adults, and **\$6 per night** for Juniors. If you choose to play at both venues in the same season (Tuesday and Thursday nights), the fees for the second venue will be reduced by **50%**.

What a bargain!!!

PANDEMIC POPS PADDLE PLEASURE

Has anyone else noticed that “Covid-19” rhymes with “Come On, Eileen”? Now that I’ve ruined that 80’s classic song for you all, it’s time to get serious.

The virus is spreading rapidly around the world and officials are cancelling events trying to keep one step ahead. Internationally, the **2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships**, the **Japan Open**, the **Korean Open**, and even the **Australian Open** have all been postponed. The **Polish Challenge Open** was already underway when the event was cancelled. The ITTF Executive Committee held an emergency meeting on Monday the 16th to discuss further action, and all international play has been suspended until the end of April.

Nationally, we have not been left unaffected by this. **Table Tennis Australia** have issued a statement (17th March) stating that **2020 National Senior, Youth and Para Championships** originally planned for April in Brisbane will be postponed. The **National Junior Championships** scheduled for July in Western Australia, and the **National Veterans Championships** scheduled for September in Darwin are still planned to go ahead. They state that the situation will be monitored and changes may occur if required.

In Victoria, the **TTV Annual General Meeting** and the **Awards Dinner** scheduled for later this month have been postponed. These events are likely to be re-scheduled for some time in May.

TABLE TENNIS IN AN OLYMPIC YEAR

I have been salivating for nearly four years at the prospect of table tennis at the **Tokyo Olympics**. The possibility of watching **Tomokazu Harimoto, Jun Mizutani, Miu Hirano, Mima Ito** and others playing in front of an adoring and enthusiastic, yet extremely polite, stadium full of fans was somehow very appealing to me. I felt that the home crowd advantage may give them enough of a boost to really challenge the Chinese dominance at the Olympics.

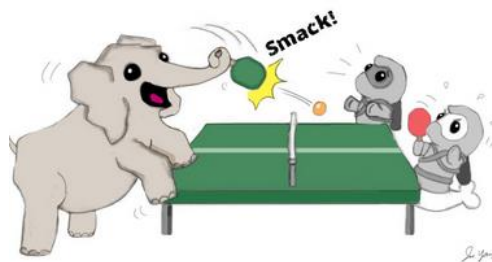
Alas and alack, it seems that the Olympics are not immune from this Covid-19 either. But all is not lost. As the Japanese Olympic officials have pointed out, the contract for the Games states that Tokyo have to run the event in 2020. It doesn’t actually state a particular time, month or season.

There is still a prospect of the Olympics going ahead. Wouldn’t it be lovely to see the marathon run with the beautiful hues of a Japanese autumn in the background. Or even if it’s later in the year, the possibility of pole-vaulters landing in a pile of snow rather than a padded bag. Could be interesting.



THE BATTLE OF THE BOARDROOM

It's time to talk about the elephant in the room. Over the past few months there has been much ruction in the Victorian table tennis scene, and all of it at the administration level. For those of you who haven't been keeping up with it, I'll try to summarise, hopefully without prejudice.



Late last year the board of **Table Tennis Victoria** released the new fee structure for the 2020 season. This is the one-off fee charged to all players which covers you for insurance purposes, as well as covering the administrative costs of running the sport for all players in Victoria. This showed a substantial fee increase for the 2020 year, a near doubling in some cases.

Suffice it to say that several clubs and individuals were quite upset about this fee increase and decided to take some action. The end result was that a **Special General Meeting** was called, and motions were put to have the existing board removed and replaced.

In the days immediately prior to the Special General Meeting, the board released news that they had decided to reduce the new fees and widen the concessions offered to players. But many in the table tennis community saw this as too little, too late.

Long story short, that Special General Meeting was held on the 24th of February. The spill motion required 75% of votes to have the existing board removed. In the end it failed, but attracted just over **60%** of votes against the existing board. When the vote was announced, several board members were seen smiling at the fact that they had kept their positions, although knowing that 60% of the people you represent don't want you doing the job is hardly a reason to smile.

In the weeks since the meeting not much else has been revealed, either by the board or by individual clubs. We eagerly await movement from either side.

... AND WE'RE NOT ALONE

It's not just us and Table Tennis Victoria that seem to be having issues. **Table Tennis Western Australia** were due to have their **AGM** on the 29th of January, but it was cancelled at the last minute due to court action taken against it. This action has been taken by 3 people who, as far as I can ascertain, were not members of TTWA until early this year.

According to a report in **The West Australian** newspaper dated **1 Feb 2020**, *"The roots of the row are hard to grasp, but issues include whether annual presentation dinners should be held at the local bowling club or swish restaurants."*

TTWA President, Mel Petch told The West Australian newspaper that the board had decided to count only the votes of people who were members at December 31 given there was a rush of new members applying to join after January 1 and then voting in the election.

Subsequent to that, **5** of the **6** board members and the **Chief Executive Officer** of TTWA resigned, leaving only one recently appointed board member in charge.

A recent search of the TTWA website shows that the “Current News” link has been disabled, and the TTWA Facebook page has no activity later than January 29th. Oh, dear. I’ll keep you informed.

And the ousting of boards is not a uniquely Australian thing. From the land of the plaintiff and the home of the defendant we bring you this.

In late-November last year, the **U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee** (USOPC) asked for all **9** members of the **USATT Board of Directors** to resign by December 18th or the USATT would be decertified as the national governing body of table tennis in the USA, and the USOPC would create a new body to take control of the sport. The board all eventually resigned, but the clean-out hasn’t stopped there.

What else has changed? All nine board members resigned, with one being brought back in as a player representative. **All five** members of the **USATT Audit Committee** have resigned. **All four** members of the **Compensation Committee** have resigned. **Six** of the **seven** members of **Ethics and Grievance Committee** have resigned. **Three** of the **eight** members of the **High Performance Committee** have resigned. **One** member of each of the **Nominating and Governing**, the **Tournaments**, and the **Umpires and Referees Committees** have resigned. The **USATT Accountant**, and the **SafeSport Specialist** left late last year. **Three** of the **four** members of the **USATT Media Team** have resigned, and the Law firm looking after USATT is being replaced.

But things are on the improve for our friends stateside. The new management team are starting to push their ideas through and have come up with a beauty. They have decided to apply a **\$25** annual fee to allow players to access their player ratings online. This, they say, is the perfect way to provide value for money and will see many more people signing up for memberships. *Yeah... right.*

In the USA, there are no state bodies with membership control, and there is no requirement to join the USATT unless you compete in national competitions. There are an estimated **35,000 league players** in America, of whom only about **2,000** are USATT members.

Imagine what they could do if they ever get themselves organised.

HOW DO YOU SEE TABLE TENNIS?

What is table tennis to you? Is it a real sport with real athletes, or is it a garage game gone wild? Should we put money into the high performance individuals, do we concentrate solely on promoting the grass roots level, or do we simply say what we’ve got is good enough?

As regular readers will know, table tennis started as an indoor, after-dinner fun thing to do in the 1880’s in England. They did this because **Netflix** had not yet been invented. It was slow to gather any form of momentum and it wasn’t until the 1920’s and 1930’s that the game actually gained traction. We’ve progressed since then, but progress happens at different rates, depending on where you live.

The **Chinese** very quickly saw the benefits of table tennis and adopted it as a national sport. They have pumped huge amounts of money into the development of the game and the players. **Japan** and **Germany** are two other countries with very highly developed table tennis cultures, together with the **Scandinavian** countries where it’s too cold to do anything outside.

These and other countries have full-time professional players competing in professional league competitions. Spectators flock to watch them do their stuff, bringing a constant stream of new players to the clubs as they try to emulate the pro's. And how about Australia? Have we kept up with the rest of the table tennis world?

The number of Australians who make their living out of table tennis is extremely small, and the number of full-time administrators, coaches, equipment suppliers and the like would easily out-number the professional players. Yes, we have professional players, but they spend most of their time playing in professional competitions in other countries.

Do we have a problem? Well, that depends on your attitude. Are you happy with where the game is in Australia at the moment and feel it doesn't need to progress? If so, no problem. If you're sick of having people mock table tennis and say it's not a real sport, even in the media (I'm looking at you, Channel 7), then yes, we have a problem.

Is there a solution? There are many. You could pump extra funds into promoting the game with young players through school programs and the like, but that's more of a long-term fix and would be at a significant cost. You could buy-in talent by encouraging high-level players to move to Australia and take out Australian citizenship. Again, not a quick fix... and not really likely. You could increase the sport's image by having Australian players near the top of the world rankings, but that would take time and would be at a significant cost. You could buy media time with slick advertising to promote the sport to a wider audience, but this would come at a significant cost.

The one thing all of these solutions have in common? *Significant cost*. And do you know the problem with "significant cost"? Someone has to pay it. Federal Government? Well, they dish out money based on the number of players registered with a particular sporting organisation. The more registered players, the more money allocated. So, table tennis is not likely to get squillions from the government... unless anyone is friendly with a sports minister???

And none of the solutions mentioned here would be quick fixes for our sport. All would take time. But time is on our side. The sport of table tennis will still be going long after we've all stopped. We may not reap the benefits ourselves, but we can certainly sew the seeds of change for the future.

To think of table tennis as a fringe sport played by a small number of enthusiasts may be accurate, but we need to dream bigger. Introducing new, younger players to innovative new programs may just be the catalyst for a future Australian champion; someone who can carry the green and gold towards the top of the world rankings. This could be the one player who turns table tennis into the sport that kids want to be involved with.

If you think having high-level athletes competing doesn't attract spectators and participants alike, let me introduce you to **Australian Rules Football**. It's because of the dedication and skill of these high-performance and highly paid players that there are so many kids at Auskick clinics. Having Australians at the top level in table tennis would create a similar trend.

The "trickle-down" effect of top-level players attracting new participants would take time; years, in fact. But the trickle-down effect works. Australian **golf** grew by more than **500%** in the years after **Greg Norman** hit the big-time. Australian **basketball** was a minor sport until the likes of **Andrew Gaze** and **Andrew Bogut** made it in the NBA. Even now, look at the effect the likes of **Ellyse Perry** and **Allysa Healy** are having on participation in **Women's Cricket**.

But think of this; if the tap is never turned on, the trickle can't start.

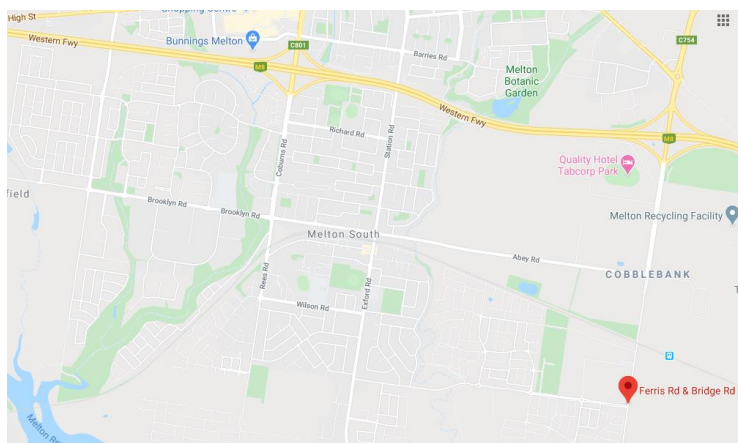


FROM THE MELTON COUNCIL WEBSITE

Directly from the website of Melton Council comes news of the new stadium being built in Melton, and from the look of it, we're included.

The new **Cobblebank Stadium** will be built on the corner of **Ferris Road** and **Bridge Road** in **Melton South**, and will be a multi-purpose community facility. According to the council's website, "The new indoor stadium will increase community participation and provide greater access for a range of sports including basketball, netball, badminton, **table tennis**, volleyball, futsal, school curriculum and community health and wellness programs."

The stadium will include six indoor high-ball courts (including show court and seating), player, referee and public amenities, administration and reception, flexible meeting and social spaces, kiosk and seating areas, and car parking. As an indication of size, the **Caroline Springs Leisure Centre** has only **5** indoor courts, so this thing is going to be **big**.



At the moment this area looks somewhat less than a building site. In fact, it looks like an empty paddock. But the surrounds offer great hope for the future. With hundreds of new homes in an estate across the road, and with the new Cobblebank railway station just a stones throw away, the opportunities to pick up new members is eye-watering.

It seems to be a long way from anything at the moment, but will soon be surrounded with the chance to take the club to even greater heights. Building work is due to commence any day now, and an estimated completion date is late-2021. Hopefully it will be ready by the start of 2022.

PROPOSED RULE CHANGE

At the ITTF Annual General Meeting each year, national associations can propose rule changes which they feel would improve the game. These are considered and, if approved, implemented.

For the 2020 meeting in April, the **Japanese Table Tennis Association** have proposed a change to the service rule. At the moment, players are required to serve by first throwing the ball straight up so that it raises **16 cm** (6 inches) above the hand, and must then be hit while it is falling. Hitting the ball straight out of the hand is illegal.

Well. The JTTA want to change this so the rule says that the serve must start by the ball being thrown straight up **to a height above the server's head**.

And the chance of this getting through? Think of a percentage less than 1.



AND SPEAKING OF HIGH TOSS SERVES

The laws of serving in our game state that, *“The server shall then project the ball near vertically upwards, without imparting spin, so that it rises at least 16cm after leaving the palm of the free hand and then falls without touching anything before being struck”*.

Many players will try to employ a “high-toss” serve in order to generate greater ball speed when it is struck. The theory is that the faster the ball is travelling, the greater the spin imparted on the ball during the serve.



So how high is a high-toss serve? And how fast will the ball be going? Obviously, any time the ball is falling, it is generating speed. It is simply a matter of how much speed can you handle. In an article on *General Physics and Fluid Dynamics*, published by **Purdue University** in the USA it was explained in the following way;

At the highest point of the toss, the ball is stationary, and therefore has a speed of 0. The ball will then fall with an acceleration of 9.5 metres per second until it is struck. The terminal velocity of a falling table tennis ball is 34.2 kmh, and this is achieved after a fall of 17 metres. It will reach 98% of that speed (33.5 kmh) after falling for 12.5 metres.

To reach terminal velocity, you would need to throw the ball straight up to a distance of 9 times your own height. 17 metres. Straight up. Try it a few times and you’ll soon see that this is as good as impossible. For a start, the friction and the force of gravity acting on the ball during the ascent will cause it to slow dramatically, so you may not be able to get anywhere near this height. And let’s not forget that the ball toss must start from *above the height of the table*, so you can’t make a massive “start at the knees” toss.

Any high-toss serve done well, even if it only goes up a couple of metres will generate speed. It’s spectacular when you get it right, but very few can achieve it on a regular basis.

Alois Rosario from **Pingskills** has suggested a very clever and very cheap training aid for the high toss serve. Place a piece of paper at your feet, toss the ball up, and try to get it to land on the paper. If you can do this consistently, you may be able to employ the high-toss serve in match play.

If it’s done properly, you will look like a champion. Done poorly it will cost you points and, worse than that, will make you look like a bit of a tosser.

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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