



CROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

December 2017

Edition 41

OUR PREZ SPEAKS, SPRING WRAPS, STAR AWARDS, AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

In the last edition for 2017, we hear from our President in our version of the Queen's Christmas broadcast, announce the Leading Players for the Spring Season, preview the upcoming Star Awards, discuss rule changes and the new scoring system, and we talk about talking about it.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Another year has rolled by and our Association continues to prosper with stable numbers and a healthy competition. The improvement of some of the younger brigade has put much pressure on the regular top performers in all grades. I sense a "changing of the guard" in A grade with the younger members of the Camilleri clan performing very well, and they are now clearly in the top 5 players in the club. The pennant seasons have been very competitive at both the team and individual level which demonstrates the good work of the match committee in team selection and the grading of individuals. It's a difficult task and there will always be disappointments but having a consistent selection process has been important to ensure an even and therefore more enjoyable competition. Congratulations to all those who have enjoyed success over the year.

Challenge matches were conducted between our Association and the Sunbury and Werribee clubs. Unfortunately, success eluded us with both Sunbury and Werribee handing us comprehensive defeats. Thank you to those players who represented MTTA in these challenges and also to the generous hospitality provided by the host clubs. Teams also represented the Association at the Victorian Country Week tournament held in Bendigo. While again, success was not with us, an enjoyable time was had by those who represented MTTA.



Fundraising during the season centred around sausage sizzles with two events being held at Bunnings Melton and another 4 days at the new Coles supermarket complex in Melton South. These events not only raised money to help with the Association finances, but also provided the opportunity to promote the Association. Flyers were distributed and feedback from shoppers was positive. More sausage sizzle events will be conducted in the new-year and Member support to help on the day would be appreciated. Also, a big thank you to Bunnings and Coles Supermarkets for offering the opportunity to run these events.

Looking to the future, discussion has commenced at Committee regarding the possibility of opening an extra night per week and perhaps running a Junior competition. More debate will be required before taking on such challenges but Committee members are optimistic regarding the possibilities. Discussion has also been held regarding the prospects of a new "home" that might better suit our needs. Ideally a premises where tables could remain erected thus saving valuable time setting up each night and then packing up after play has completed. Such a venue would also reduce wear and tear on our equipment reducing our overall costs.

As I do every year, I want to ask that Members keep an eye out for potential new players that may be interested in joining us. Family, friends, workmates or school mates are all welcome to join or participate socially. The 2018 season will commence mid-January and I hope to see you all back. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

Chris Blake - President

SPRING SEASON RESULTS

Another great year is coming to an end at Melton Table Tennis with the Spring season about to wrap up. Unfortunately, due to the week's delay we had during the season, I can't give you the results of the Grand Finals, but I can tell you about the most consistent players over the course of the season.

The **A Grade** Leading Player was **Michael Louey**, narrowly beating **Marc Camilleri** for the title.

B Grade had **Naim Chdid** just taking the honour over a pack which included **Clint Daulo** and **Jim Scott**.

The **C1 Grade** Leading Player was **Connor Ziday**, with **Jesse McKinnes** narrowly behind.

C2 Grade Leading Player was **Mohammad Shshifuil** who easily accounted for the rest.

Our congratulations go to them all.

MELTON / WERRIBEE CHALLENGE

On a bright and sunny Spring Sunday, a group of enthusiastic players from Melton travelled to **Eagle Stadium** in **Werribee** to again put our best foot forward against **Werribee Table Tennis**. Unfortunately, after putting our best foot forward we seem to have got our legs caught up on something and fallen flat on our face.

Despite us battling hard across all tables on the day, Werribee narrowly took victory by **61** rubbers to **20**. The top 3 tables were close-run affairs, with Werribee winning each 5-4, but if you do the maths, things were not so rosy on the other tables.



We again congratulate Werribee Table Tennis for their victory and for retaining the Shield.

Now let us never speak of this again.

PRESENTATION NIGHT

Thursday the 14th of December is the Melton Table Tennis Presentation night taking place at **Q-Lounge, 20 McKenzie St Melton**. Located just behind the *Golden Fleece Hotel*, this will be a great night where we look back over our 2017 seasons, praise the winners and commiserate with the rest of us.

This year will see over **100** trophies handed out to some very deserving players. The **Club Champion** awards will be presented by our very special guest speaker who we know will inspire you with her story.

We will be providing a sit-down meal at this year's event, rather than the finger-food supplied at last year's presentation night. As such, we will need to have bookings in as soon as possible to allow for proper catering. Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages will be available to purchase from the private bar.

If you haven't got your tickets yet, contact **Matt** or **Glenn** as soon as possible to reserve your place at our end of year knees-up. At just **\$15** a head, this is a night not to be missed.

2018 AT MTTA

Will we be back next year? *You betcha*. Better than ever, Melton Table Tennis will resume playing with our bats and balls, still at the same venue, and still on **Thursday nights at 7:00pm**. Dare I say it? Same bat-time. Same bat-channel. (*Sorry*).

In 2018 we will return to running a **5-week Summer season**, followed by **10-week** seasons for **Winter** and **Spring**. Our first night back will be **Thursday the 18th of January** for Practice and Grading, with the Summer season kicking off on **8th of February**.

Our fund-raisers are back on as well. The first one scheduled for 2018 will be at **Coles Supermarket**, Melton South from **10:00am – 2:00pm** on **Sunday the 14th of January**. This will give us a chance to raise our profile in the community before our Practice and Grading nights. We can hopefully get some new players interested. If you can help on the day, please contact one of the committee.

And for something extra in 2018, read on.

PRACTICE OR HANDICAP... IT'S YOUR CHOICE

During 2018, there will be 11 practice nights at MTTA. As usual, you can come along and have a social hit or spend some time honing whatever skill you feel needs some work. But also on Practice nights in 2018, MTTA will be running a **Handicap** competition.

Each night will be a separate competition with players randomly placed into groups and handicapped games played to **31**. Points will be allocated depending of your finishing position on the night, with details of games published on the noticeboard and on the website.

The great thing about the competition is that you don't have to commit to play in every round. You can play when you want the challenge. Each player will have their **best 5 results** added to calculate their ladder position for a **Handicap Finals** night at the end of the year, with trophies to be awarded at the Presentation night.

The first 3 rounds of the Handicap competition will be on the **18th and 25th of January**, and the **1st of February**.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP WRAP

The **2017 Women's World Cup** has been run and won. Played in **Markham, Canada** at the end of October, and featuring 20 of the best from around the world, it will be remembered more for the controversy of a single point rather than the quality of the matches overall. But we'll discuss that later.

Jian Fang Lay was representing Australia and came up against **Georgina Pota** of **Hungary** and **Matilda Ekholm** from **Sweden**, 2 of the top European Women's players. Unfortunately, she didn't progress beyond these matches.

The final was an all-China affair between **Zhu Yuling** and **Liu Shiwen**, with victory going to Zhu, 11-13, 6-11, 11-7, 11-8, 10-12, 11-9, 12-10. This victory pushes Zhu Yuling to the top of the World Ranking in a change to the way that the rankings are calculated, but more on that later as well.

MORE RULE CHANGES IN THE MIX ?

An incident in the recent **Women's World Cup** could have repercussions on the future of our sport. Not disastrous, but enough to have some people jumping with joy, while others hang their heads and sob. But don't worry. It won't have any effect at club level.

During the gold medal match between **Liu Shiwen** and **Zhu Yuling**, a disputed edge gave Liu Shiwen a game point, but this was vigorously disputed by Zhu Yuling. The point was eventually allowed to stand, although slow motion replays suggest that the ball may have grazed the edge of the table.

This has prompted a response from the ITTF. **CEO, Steve Dainton** has said, *"We will test edge ball reviews in 2018 and look to implement at all major ITTF events in 2019. We are even considering that the player can challenge any decision during the match, including the legality of the opponents service."*



So, if video reviews are brought in, will it cause delays in the game? Will it be as frustrating as waiting for a goal review at an AFL game? Possibly, but there are a very small number of disputed edge calls in table tennis and this would be a minor distraction.



But players being able to call for a video review to check on an opponent's serve? Can you imagine the disruptions that this will cause? Games will be delayed as the umpires and match referee's run off to check the tape 4 or 5 times per game. Fans will get frustrated by the delays. And will these delays cause matches to run too long? Will the expedite rule come into play? Will television broadcasters throw to an ad break every time a challenge is called?

Oh, if only players would learn to serve legally.....

AND NOW WE ADD IT UP THIS WAY

The ITTF World Rankings were released at the start of November with some big changes in it. On the Men's list, former World number **3, Xu Xin** and number **6, Zhang Jike** both disappeared from the list. On the Women's list, World number **1, Ding Ning** was also removed and World Cup winner, **Zhu Yuling** was instated as the new top dog.

And the reason they were removed? Inactivity. If a player does not compete in international tournaments for a period of 12 months, they will be considered "Inactive", and will now be removed from the list. They won't lose their points, but they won't be shown on the rankings list until they start playing again. By the time you read this, all 3 will be back on the ranking list, as all of them were scheduled to play in tournaments during November.

And from the **1st of January, 2018**, the way the ITTF Ranking points are calculated will also be changed. Currently, points are won or lost based on a ratio between the players in the match, however this is being changed so that points will be allocated depending on which round of a tournament players get to before being knocked out.

And players will no longer lose points. *Really?* In the Under-8's football they don't keep score, because everyone's a winner, but we're talking about professional sports here. If you lose, *you lose*.

Japanese young gun **Tomokazu Harimoto** is heading toward the world number one position. At **14** years of age, he is currently ranked **14th** in the world and is on **2608** points. The current world number one is **29** years old and is on **3323** points. The average age of players above Harimoto is **28**. Harimoto could still be playing long after all of these opponents have retired. If there is no chance of him losing points, once Harimoto gets to number one (and he will), I can see him holding that position unchallenged for many years.

2017 ITTF STAR AWARDS

The annual awards ceremony for the best of the best in the table tennis world will be held in **Astana**, the capital city of **Kazakhstan** (*no, I didn't know either*). This glittering event will be held on **Thursday** the **14th of December**. I'm not sure if anyone will be turning up to attend this, seeing as it's on the same night as our Awards ceremony, but good on them for trying.

The Male and Female players of the year are chosen by popular vote, as is the award for the best rally of the year. Other awards are chosen by a panel of judges and include the Male and Female Para player of the year, Coach of the year, the Breakthrough award, and an award for Fair Play.

The **Male Table Tennis Star** has as its nominees **Ma Long** from **China**, **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** and **Timo Boll**, both from **Germany**, and **Tomokazu Harimoto** from **Japan**.

The **Female Table Tennis Star** nominees are **Ding Ning** and **Zhu Yuling**, both from **China**, **Miu Hirano** from **Japan**, and **Cheng I-Ching** from **Chinese Taipei**.

The **Breakthrough Star** Award will be chosen from **Tomokazu Harimoto** of **Japan**, **Sun Yingsha** of **China**, and **Ioannis Sgouropoulos** from **Greece**.

We'll have a full wrap-up of the event in the first edition of **Across The Net** next year.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

I haven't been involved in table tennis for long, and what time I have had in the sport has been riddled with mostly non-table tennis related injuries and illness.

In the early 1980's I had a brief but exciting stint playing in a small league in very small halls around the Western suburbs of Melbourne. Our home courts were 3 tables under poor lighting with uneven floors in an abandoned church in Yarraville. The change room was your car, and the toilet facilities... well, let's not go there.

But it was fun. That is, it was fun until my second singles match in the grand final played in a hall on Geelong Road, Brooklyn. With 2 tables in the hall, they used fish-net hung from the ceiling to separate the tables. In a vigorous rally, I had been forced back to lob defensively. I got pushed so far back that I accidentally stepped on the fish-net and slipped. As the tendons normally holding the muscles of my groin in place parted company with the bone, I remember thinking that I may not be playing table tennis again for a while.

For nearly 30 years after that, life got in the way. I made my comeback in 2012 when I discovered, almost by accident that there was a table tennis club in Melton. I had to miss part of 2013 due to illness, and most of 2014 due to a non-table tennis related back injury which carried on into 2015.

Most of you have heard me tell the horror stories concerning my eyes which have forced me to stand out of competition for 2017. But with the glasses now allowing me to tell the difference between my knee and my elbow, I have started having a hit on the table again. It hasn't come together just yet. I still have a lot to re-learn as I adjust to playing with the glasses, but I'm back.

Re-learning and adjusting is as much a part of table tennis as it is a part of life. It's not a bad thing. It forces you to re-evaluate and modify to make the best of your new situation. My time away from the table has not diminished my love of the game. If anything, that has been enhanced, as has my respect and admiration for people who need to fight back from much more adversity than I have had to face.



My tribulations are nothing compared to those faced by countless others, and this year has given me time to reflect on the fact that, no matter how I was feeling at the time, I was a damn-side better off than many.

So I encourage you all to spend some time considering what you have to be grateful for rather than complaining about what you don't have or can't do now. If you have challenges, remember that you can't overcome them unless you face them.

As **Helen Keller** once said, "*Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.*"

For the record, I lost my first match back. Badly. But I couldn't stop smiling the whole way through it.

DECEMBER TOURNAMENTS

From the 14th to the 17th, the finals of the **ITTF World Tour** will be held in beautiful downtown **Astana**, the capital city of **Kazakhstan** (*I only knew that because I read it on page 5*).

Locally can be summed up in the following terms:- absent of any, diddly squat, donut, goose-egg, nada, nary a one, naught, nil, nix, none, not an iota, not any, nothing at all, not one, not a trace, zero, zilch, zippo.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

A friend of mine once stepped into a crowded lift. Instead of doing the usual thing of turning to face the doors, he stood facing the dozen or so strangers already in the lift with a large smile on his face. As soon as the doors closed behind him, he cleared his throat and said, *"You're probably wondering why I've call you all here today."* He did it for comedic effect and had a captive audience until the doors opened again. Some of his audience didn't like it, while others got the joke and appreciated the humour. Some felt uncomfortable, but those who got it wouldn't have had the chance if my friend didn't take the opportunity to try it.

It's the same when you try to talk to someone about table tennis. It's hard to get many to take you seriously. The image of the games room or garage is at the front of most people's mind. They may be able to see the social aspect of it, but can they see the sport in it? We need to change people's attitude to the game. But how do we do that?

We know that it's not difficult to walk into your local club and to get involved, but do they know that? Do they know that it's in both the Commonwealth and Olympic Games? Do they know Australia is now getting world class events, including world championships, being played here? Do they know that table tennis is a *whole-of-life* sport? Do they know of the health benefits to be gained by playing the game? **Tell them**. We regularly use the **Coles** and **Bunnings** sausage sizzles as a way to raise our profile in the community and to raise awareness of the sport. We may not grab a new member immediately, but a seed is planted.

Table tennis is now appearing in more and more television commercials, and we can point to several TV shows and movies where it's featured. Perhaps this could be used as a conversation starter. Imagine if we could motivate people to play table tennis instead of sitting in front of a TV screen. Perhaps we should start to phrase our table tennis conversations in a manner that more people can associate with; *the sound of the movies*.

Wake up and say, *"I love the smell of table tennis in the morning."*

Hold up your right hand, spread your fingers and say, *"Live long and play table tennis."*

Try finishing a conversation with, *"Frankly, my dear, I play table tennis."*

Click your heels three times and say, *"There's no game like table tennis"*.

Walk into your boss's office and say, *"My name is Maximus Decimus Meridius, commander of the Armies of the North, General of the Felix Legions and loyal servant to the true emperor, Marcus Aurelius. Father to a murdered son, husband to a murdered wife. And I will play table tennis, in this life and the next."*

Or maybe, *"Of all the table tennis clubs in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine."*

Whichever way you do it, find a way to talk to someone about our sport. And I don't mean someone you play table tennis with. I mean someone who isn't already involved in it. A friend, a neighbour, a work colleague, a total stranger. You should try it. And not in an apologetic way. Playing table tennis is nothing to be ashamed of. You should be proud of it. Open a window and shout, *"I'm as mad as hell AND I PLAY TABLE TENNIS"*.

NO-ONE TO BLAME BUT THEMSELVES

There is unrest in the ranks of Chinese table tennis fans over the fact that current World number one, **Ma Long**, is not in the **World Tour Finals** being held in **Astana**, the capital city of **Kazakhstan** (*remember? It was on pages 5 & 6*). The finals, being held from the **14th** to the **17th** of **December** are the culmination of the 12-round competition played throughout the year.

One of the qualification requirements for the finals is that the player must have competed at a minimum of five of the twelve rounds. Ma Long only played at 4 rounds, meaning he is ineligible to play in the finals, world number one or not.

Perhaps now the Chinese Table Tennis Association regret withdrawing the Chinese Men from competing at the **Australian World Tour** match on the **Gold Coast** because of their protest over the sacking of their coach.

ON THE WEB

Each year at this time I stress the importance of practice. Footballers get a short break and are quickly back into training. Why don't we do the same?

The break over the summer is a perfect time to develop new skills and improve those parts of your game that were lacking this year. It's also the best time to upgrade your equipment so that you can get use to any changes before the new season starts. In his book, *The Art of War*, **Sun-Tze** stressed the importance of preparation by saying, "***The battle is over before the battle has begun***".

Preparation and practice are the keys to playing better, so here are a couple of web sites you should definitely check out.

For all your equipment needs, go to www.affordablett.com.au and search to find the best Christmas present. All of us who have dealt with **Rob Katsipis** can attest to his patience and knowledge in getting you the best combination of blade and rubbers to suit your game. Affordablett also has a wide range of accessories such as clothing and carry bags which make a perfect gift, especially if it's for yourself.



To assist with your training, go to www.pingskills.com. Run by **Alois Rosario** and **Jeff Plumb**, this site features all you will need to improve your skill level. Sign up to receive regular emails and podcasts. If you like what you see, consider taking their Premium membership for access to even more video's and regular training and practice tips.



American football coach **Vince Lombardi** said, "***Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence.***"

Chase perfection

OUR MESSAGE TO ALL READERS

Melton Table Tennis has concluded another strong year. Although our player numbers were down, enjoyment from all players was still high. With the addition of our website, everyone is able to see their results, with both Team Ladders and Leading Players updated weekly. This has also given us many additional readers to our newsletter. We have again had three seasons of really close competition and the winners this year will be receiving their trophies at our Presentation night, again being held at Q-Lounge in Melton.

Coles Supermarkets and **Bunnings** have once again this year provided fund-raising for our club, and with us handing out flyers to customers, provided an opportunity to promote our club and our sport. Our members really put their best foot forward in April by donating nearly **\$500** to the **Royal Children's Hospital Appeal** in a night of fun and laughter. It was a magnificent effort and we should all be very proud of it. We've had some very interesting articles in the Newsletter this year as well. We've looked back at the careers of two table tennis and tennis champions, looked at the founder of the sport and his brother, as well as many other matters of interest. Readership of the newsletter has expanded. Its purpose has been to inform and amuse, and I hope that you feel that these aims have been met. I will try to keep to these ideals and supply you with substantially more in 2018.

The upcoming break should give us time to spend with family and to reflect on what is important to us.

All of you are welcome to join us when we gather to play the game that we love. And if my main message has escaped you, then try reading the first letter of each line.



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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