



# **ACROSS THE NET**

## **Melton Table Tennis**

October 2017

Edition 39

### **NEW COMMITTEE, SUNBURY SHUTDOWN, JAPANESE TEENAGE RAMPAGE, & OUR FOUNDING FATHER**

In this edition, we discuss our AGM and the new committee, talk about our challenge match with Sunbury, discuss young champs, find out that knights in shining armour play table tennis, and talk about the person we all need to thank for our game.

### **NEW COMMITTEE**

The Annual General Meeting of Melton Table Tennis was held on Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> of September and showed once again that our club is healthy and progressing.

In his address to members, President **Chris Blake** pointed out the fact that, while player numbers were down on recent years, the club is in a healthy position both organisationally and financially, with an improving standard of play in all grades. Chris praised the work of the committee, and expressed the intention of getting the club open on an additional night, particularly for training and coaching of junior players.

All committee positions were declared vacant, and elections for office-bearers were held. Your new committee is :-

President	<b>Chris Blake</b>
Vice-President	<b>Matthew Camilleri</b>
Secretary	<b>Geof Walker</b>
Treasurer	<b>Larry Hallinan</b>
General Committee	<b>Glenn O'Dea</b>
General Committee	<b>Dean Camilleri</b>
General Committee	<b>Steve Batten</b>
General Committee	<b>Graham Huggett</b>
General Committee	<b>Sarah Lappin</b>
General Committee	<b>Ed Menegol</b>

These people represent *your* interests. If you have any ideas to assist in the successful running of the club, please feel free to approach any of them to have your suggestions discussed.

### **A FIRST AT MTTA**



Melton Table Tennis Association has now been running, in one form or another, for about **20 years**, and **Chris Blake** and **Andy Stewart** have been with it since the start. In a curious twist of selection, Chris Blake pointed out that this season he and Andy are playing on the same team *for the first time*.



## MELTON / SUNBURY CHALLENGE

On the night before the **AFL Grand Final Eve** holiday, an enthusiastic group of players made the trek from Melton to Sunbury in an attempt to retain the shield we so gallantly won at last year's event. Unfortunately, the results didn't go quite the way we would have wanted, and Sunbury won the event by **7 tables to 3**.



Melton president, **Chris Blake**, seen here handing the shield back to Sunbury president, **Michael Delavaris**, thanked the Sunbury club for allowing the event to be held there, and also congratulated all players for a great night of competition played in a friendly atmosphere.

Melton players who excelled on the night included **Milan Lukavic**, **Connor Ziday** and **Steve Batten** who each won all of the matches they played.

Oh, and **Graham Huggett** wanted to be mentioned for being on one of the 3 winning tables. But it's a team effort, Graham. It's a team effort.

## WE SIZZLED IT

Once again, **MTTA** spent a day at **Bunnings**, the spiritual home of the sausage sizzle. In another great effort, we were able to raise significant funds for the club as well as raising awareness of us and our sport.

Our thanks go to the hardy group of volunteers who manned the grill, handled the cash, and did more spruiking than a ringmaster in a three-ring circus; **Chris Blake**, **Geof Walker**, **Glenn O'Dea**, **Matt Camilleri**, **Dean Camilleri**, **Marc Camilleri**, and honorary member, **Keeley Button**.



## NORTH KOREAN NON-INTEREST

The finals of the **1979** World Championships in **Pyongyang, North Korea** were interesting. With very few foreign visitors allowed into the country, the crowds were very heavily in favour of North Korean players.

One by one the North Korean players were knocked out of the championship until only one remained. **Li Song Suk** would be the last North Korean left and would represent her country in the final of the Women's Singles.

The order of play on the final day was Women's Doubles, Men's Doubles, Mixed Doubles, Women's Singles and Men's Singles. A crowd of over **5,000** shuffled in at the start of the day. Foreign players suspected that, from the look of many in the crowd they were bussed in from rural areas and had little knowledge or interest in table tennis. Sitting quietly and applauding politely during the doubles matches, the crowd's expectations rose as the Women's Singles match started, and when Suk won the first game they nearly blew the roof off the stadium with their cheers. Whenever Suk's Chinese opponent won a point, the crowd would hiss, saving their cheers for Suk. Unfortunately, the hisses were outnumbering the cheers as Suk lost the following games and the match.

After the match had completed, Suk bowed her head and walked from the arena. As soon as she had gone through the exit doors, the entire North Korean crowd rose to their feet and shuffled out of the stadium, leaving the Men's final between **Seichi Ono** of Japan and **Guo Yuehua** of China to be played in front of a couple of hundred international players and media representatives.

### **TABLE TENNIS PLAYER ELECTED TO NEW PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE**

Last month it was announced that **Danni Di Toro** has taken a position with the newly formed Athlete Commission within the **Australian Paralympic Committee**.

The Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) established an Athlete Commission with the aim of giving more power to athletes in deciding the direction of Paralympic sport within Australia, and Danni was elected as the Vice Chairperson of the committee.

An Australian tennis and table tennis representative, six-time Paralympian, and co-captain of the 2016 Australian Paralympic Team, Danni is well qualified to represent Australian Para sport. *"It really is an exciting time for the Paralympic movement in Australia and to be honoured with the role of Vice Chair of the APC Athletes Commission is a real pleasure and a privilege,"* she said.



### **AND SPEAKING OF PARALYMPICS**

It was recently announced that the Table Tennis events at the **2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games** will be extended with **2** additional categories, as well as the removal of the third-place play-off, with both participants receiving a Bronze medal.

The current Women's Team Class 6-10 event for standing female Para athletes will be split into **Class 6-8** and **Class 9-10** to allow fairer competition. Similarly, the Men's Team Class 6-8 event will be separated into **Class 6-7** and **Class 8** events.

The end result of this is an additional **37** medals being awarded to table tennis, the chance for more players to be involved, and a greater exposure for Para athletes in our sport.

### **WAS IT SOMETHING I SAID ?**

At the end of August, I stumbled upon the news that **Peter Marriott, CEO of Table Tennis Australia** had resigned.

For clarity, when I say *"stumbled"*, I mean that I found a memo on the Table Tennis Victoria website stating that he had gone and that the CEO position would be advertised immediately. And when I say *"resigned"*, I mean that he's no longer there, and no public explanation has been given.

About a week later, a one-sentence notice was placed on the TTA website News page stating that Peter had resigned, but giving no other details. Nothing has appeared since.

The Board of TTA are seeking an interim CEO, and will be advertising later in the year for someone to fill the position in a permanent capacity to start in January 2018. If you're up for the job, don't go to the TTA website or Facebook page. They don't mention anything about it. Have a look on Table Tennis Victoria's website and Facebook page. The application form can be found there.

## THE YOUNGEST EVER

I am constantly amazed by the capacity of dedicated people to accomplish outstanding things. It happens all the time in all facets of life; science, industry, business, sport. Many of these achievements pass us by unnoticed, but occasionally one peaks our interest. My interest was peaked recently by the achievements of **Tomokazu Harimoto**.

In the **Czech Open**, 14-year-old Harimoto became the youngest person to win a table tennis Open championship. And he did it by taking out an impressive opponent. After beating **Hugo Calderano** in a thrilling seven-set match in the semi-final, Harimoto came up against the top-seeded **Timo Boll** from **Germany**. Taking the top step of the podium, (11-3, 4-11, 8-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-9), Harimoto became the youngest person to win a Men's Singles Open Championship. The previous youngest in the Men's was China's **Yu Ziyang** who was 16 years and 30 days when he won his first title.



Harimoto also became the youngest person, male or female, to win an Open Singles Championship, taking the record off fellow Japanese player, **Mima Ito**. Interestingly, Ito, now 16 years old, won the Women's Singles Championship at the Czech Open, meaning that the combined age of both winners was just **30**.

It's easy to look at this achievement as just another bunch of figures, but think seriously for a moment about what is required to get to this level. Harimoto has an ITTF Ranking of **13**. A 14-year-old is rated the **13<sup>th</sup>** best male table tennis player in the world. Mima Ito at 16 years of age is rated the **7<sup>th</sup>** best female table tennis player in the world.

Think about what you were doing at that age. At fourteen I was..... well, I'd rather not elaborate on that, but I would certainly not have been willing or able to put in the hours of practice required every day to get to the level that these teenagers have achieved.

In 3 years time, the sporting world will be focused on the **2020 Tokyo Olympics**. Ito and Harimoto will be 19 and 17 respectively, competing at the Olympics in their home country with hundreds of millions of eyes on them. Will these two, still in their teenage years, be able to handle the pressure and win the ultimate sporting prize? I wouldn't bet against them.

## IT'S IN THE BOOK

And speaking of **Mima Ito**, did you know that she's in the **Guinness Book of Records**..... **4 times**? Yes, you read it right. Mima Ito has 4 entries in the Guinness Book of World Records. 3 of them seem pretty obvious. She was in the youngest Doubles partnership to win a World Tour event, she was the youngest Singles Champion on the World Tour at just 14 years and 153 days, and she is the youngest to win a table tennis medal at the Olympic Games.

But the 4<sup>th</sup> one is a cracker. In 2011, when she was just **10 years old**, she set the record for the most consecutive counter-hits of **180 in 60 seconds**. Between her and her training partner, they managed to keep the ball in play and make *3 shots per second* for a full minute. Try it. Bet you don't get close.

## CHIVALRY IS NOT DEAD

Every sport has its bad boys. The ones who grab all the headlines for all the wrong reasons. You know who they are. I only need mention the name *Nick Kyrgios* for you to understand the type I mean.

They're in table tennis as well. Less obvious, admittedly, but they're there. And I'm not just talking about at the international level. No. I'm talking about at club and local tournament level. I've played a tournament where the umpire awarded a point against me when a ball clearly missed the table and the umpire claimed it hit. Even my opponent was surprised. And when my opponent threw the ball up to serve and then caught it, no point was awarded to me and she was allowed to serve again. Same game, same umpire. Did I mention that the umpire was on the same team as my opponent? I'm not bitter... I'm just sayin'.

But it's not all bad. There are players out there who are a pleasure to compete against. Talented ones, too. The type of people who make you feel good while crushing your attack and grinding you into the dust, but making you smile while they do it.

I've spoken before about the **Fair Play awards** at the annual **ITTF Star Awards** ceremony in December each year, and there were a few early contenders for a nomination on show at this year's World Championships in **Dusseldorf**.

In the Quarter-final match between **Ma Long** and **Timo Boll**, Ma Long played a great shot down the line which just caught the edge of the table. Neither umpire noticed the edge, and despite both Ma and Boll alerting them to the edge, the point was awarded to Timo Boll. When Ma Long served for the next point, Boll, who was already behind in the game, deliberately hit the ball into the net on the return, effectively giving the point back to Ma Long.

Later in the same match, Ma Long had forced Boll back from the table with a series of smashes which Boll was lobbing back. One of the smashes touched Boll's shirt on the way through and, although unseen by the umpires, was immediately acknowledged by Boll, giving Ma Long another point.

Also at the World Championships was a very close doubles match with **Jonathan Groth** of **Denmark** & **Patrick Franziska** of **Germany** playing against **Ovidiu Ionescu** & **Adrian Crisan** of **Romania**. And where I say close, try **13-13** in the **7<sup>th</sup>** game. With the Romanians serving, the ball landed very close to, but on the wrong side of the centre line. The serve should have been declared a fault, but neither umpire picked it up, and the point was awarded to Ionescu & Crisan, despite the protests of Groth & Franziska. Even though the Romanians admitted to the fault, the umpire didn't alter the scorecard. In an amazing feat of sportsmanship, Ionescu walked to the scorer and changed the scorecard himself to award the point to his opponents.



Groth & Franziska won the next point, taking the game 15-13, and the match 4 games to 3, but the prize for fair play certainly goes to the Romanians, and particularly to **Ovidiu Ionescu**.

## **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.

### **OCTOBER TOURNAMENTS**

Internationally, the end of the month is interesting. The **Men's World Cup** will be held in **Liege, Belgium** from the **20<sup>th</sup>** to the **22<sup>nd</sup>**. Australia will be represented by **David Powell**. The **Women's World Cup** will be held in **Markham, Canada** from the **27<sup>th</sup>** to the **29<sup>th</sup>**. **Jian Fang Lay** will be flying the Aussie flag for us.

Both of these events will be covered on the ITTV website and will feature some great matches.

Locally, the **National Veterans Championship** will be held in **Mandurah, Western Australia** from the **7<sup>th</sup>** to the **14<sup>th</sup>**.

On **Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup>**, **Werribee** will host their **Veterans Open**.

### **ON THE WEB**

I've just found a good one. [www.zoomtt.com](http://www.zoomtt.com) has some extremely interesting content. As well as some fascinating and well written articles, there is a section where they do a "**Match Analysis**". Of the dozen or so already on there, the most recent is the **Timo Boll vs Tomokazu Harimoto** final at the Czech Open.

As well as video footage of the match, the analysis contains many interesting facts including **Rally Length**, **Stroke Usage**, **Shot Efficiency**, and **Serve Location**. It gives a fascinating insight into the game and is certainly worth a visit.

*What's your favourite table tennis site on the web?* Let us know so we can share it with other members.

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## **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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