



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

July 2018

Edition 46

BACK FROM THE BREAK, CLUB CHAMPS, BENDIGO RESULTS, TABLE TENNIS USA, & MUCH MORE

In this edition we talk about our upcoming Cub Championships, praise our players at the Bendigo Teams Championships, wrap-up the World Teams Cup and the Japan Open, discuss the next whiz-kid, remind you to get your tickets for the Australian Open, and talk about the pro's and con's of table tennis in the USA.

WE'RE BACK AND READY TO GO

After our enforced mid-year hiatus, the Winter season has resumed. While there were a few rusty players and many creaking joints, the hall was full of people enjoying being back at the table.

With only 2 weeks left in the Winter season, we will soon be battling it out in the finals. After that, we have the 3 weeks that everyone looks forward to.

2018 MTTA CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

Our thoughts should now turn to the annual **Club Championships** coming up in August. 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.

Week 1 on the **2nd of August** is the **Handicap Championship**. Every player has a chance of winning this, regardless of your standing in the club. Each player is given a handicap ranking and matches are played up to **31 points**. Some top players may start on **0** or even a *negative points score*, while the lower rated players may start on up to **25** points. It's fun to watch the top players sweating in these games, as they can't afford to make a mistake.

In **Week 2**, on the **9th of August**, we run the **Doubles Championship** and the **Shootout**. Doubles partnerships are paired on the night, with the lowest ranked player being teamed up with the highest ranked, and so on for other players. This gives everyone an even chance of winning the award. The **Shootout** is a quick-fire knockout competition of the first player to three points. 2 players go in.... only 1 comes out.

Week 3 on the **16th of August** is the club **Singles Championship**. Divided into 3 groups, (A Grade, B Grade and C Grade), it starts as a round-robin contest before progressing to a knockout phase.

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.

BENDIGO TEAMS CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

The annual Teams Championships for country associations, held in Bendigo over the Queen's Birthday long weekend has drawn to a close for another year. Our great gang are now known as "*The Legends of Country Week*".

With teams being entered in 7 divisions, it was the highest representation Melton has had since the championships were moved to Bendigo several years ago.

On a daily basis, half of the team travelled up the highway from Melton to Bendigo in a mini-bus driven each day by **Matt Camilleri**. The other half stayed in Bendigo, sharing accommodation.

With clubs coming from all across Victoria, it was also the largest number of players entering the competition overall, with the contests covering Division A, Divisions B1 to B4, Divisions C1 to C4, Divisions D1 to D4, and Divisions E1 to E7.

Despite the fierce competition, Melton players were able to come away with **3 Division Championships**, as well as **4 Individual awards**. Our Division Champions were **C1 (Matt Camilleri, Marc Camilleri and Shannon Camilleri)**, **D2 (Chris Addis, Milan Lukovic and Ed Menegol)**, and **E1 (Graham Huggett, Connor Ziday and Matt Magro)**.

The Individual award winners from Melton were **Chris Addis** and **Milan Lukovic** who shared the **D2 aggregate**, both winning **100%** of their matches over the event, **Connor Ziday** who won the **E1 aggregate** with a **93%** winning rate, and **Matt Magro** who won the **E Grade Singles Championship**.

Those attending were: (back row) **Shannon Camilleri, Matt Camilleri, Ed Menegol, Ross Lappin, Graham Huggett, Anna Jurkovic & Dean Camilleri**, (centre row) **Annemarie Rothwell, Sharyn Ciberlin, Steve Jaunkalns, Steve Batten, Brett Woods, Geof Walker, Milan Lukovic, Marc Camilleri**, (front row) **Chris Addis, Angela Cricchiola, Sarah Lappin, Lauren Lappin, Christy Koppman, Ross Craddock, Connor Ziday**. (**Matt Magro** was absent from the photo).



Our thanks go to **Geof Walker** for taking on the administration work involved in getting such a great turn-out of Melton players to the event, and our thanks go to all players for giving up their time to represent Melton Table Tennis. For those of us following the championships on social media, many thanks to **Graham Huggett** for his inspired post-event coverage, and to **Annemarie Rothwell** for the many photos taking during the weekend.

B.O.G.: Addis, Lukovic, Ziday, Magro

Reports : Camilleri M. (Sleeping)

Injuries : Walker (knee)



CHINA WIN WORLD TEAM CUPS WHILE KOREA'S UNITE

China have again been victorious in winning both the **Swaythling Cup** and the **Corbillion Cup** at the 2018 Men's and Women's World Cups. We should be used to hearing that now, because it's been said many times before.

Watching the replay of the Men's final against **Germany** was somewhat of a disappointment. With the telecast scheduled for 3 hours, the broadcaster had to show a rather long presentation ceremony with some overly long speeches just trying to fill the time. They still had time to show a 45-minute stand-by program on the history of the Daytona 500 motor race.

China had, without much surprise, selected **Fan Zhengdong**, **Ma Long** and **Xu Xin** as their players in the final. Germany were without **Dimitrij Ovtcharov** who appeared to be injured, and instead selected **Timo Boll**, **Ruwen Filus** and **Patrick Franziska**. All 3 players suffered 3-0 defeats at the hands of the Chinese.

The Women's final between China and Japan was a better spectacle but finished again with Chinese dominance. **Mima Ito** defeated **Lui Shiwen** in a 5-game thriller (11-9, 8-11, 5-11, 11-8, 12-10). The following matches were all straight sets victories to the Chinese team, leading them to a 3-1 victory and to the Women's World Team Championship yet again.

In the **1991 World Championships**, the then president of the ITTF, **Ichiro Ogimura** convinced both North and South Korea to compete as a united team for the first time since the Korean war. In 2018, the Women's teams from North and South Korea decided to do the same thing. **Korea Republic** and **DPR Korea** were set to meet at the quarter-finals of the Women's Championship, but in an amazing turn of events the two sides decided against playing one another and instead it was announced that a Unified Korea team would be formed. They performed valiantly in their 3-0 defeat by **Japan** but, despite the result, the team secured a bronze medal finish.

So, will the main talking point of the 2018 World Teams Cup be the total dominance of China, or the re-unification of Korean table tennis? I'll let history decide.



BOLL BOOK BRINGING BELIEF OR BEMUSEMENT?

Some champions can write, and some have a story which can be written for them. Take “*My Journey*” by **Jim Stynes**, for example. Others may have been great players, but struggle to have any of their scribbles make sense. I offer “*Billy’s Book for Blokes*” by **Billy Brownless** as exhibit A. And it’s not just football players. Many table tennis players have either written books or had books written about them.

And now another one is coming onto a bookshelf near you soon. “*Table Tennis with Timo Boll*”, written by **Bernd-Ulrich Gross** will be released in July. Gross is a respected coach and author with five previous books on table tennis, including “*Table Tennis: Tips from a World Champion*”.

Table Tennis with Timo Boll will feature descriptions of modern techniques, with Timo’s thoughts on tactics, philosophy, and information on equipment. Designed with both player’s and coaches in mind, the book will feature 850 photo’s and illustrations to emphasis the points being made.



Will the thoughts of the 37-year-old former number one be worth the price of the book? We’ll let you know once it’s released.

HARIMOTO, ITO VICTORIOUS

How do you impress your home crowd in a major Open event? Well, by winning is the obvious answer. Winning as a 14-year-old would certainly be a better way. So how about a 14-year-old winning the **Japan Open Men’s Singles** by beating **two** former world champions in **two** days? Yeah... that’ll work.

That’s exactly what wonderkid **Tomokazu Harimoto** has done. Facing the former world number 1 and current world number 2, **Ma Long** in the quarter-finals, Harimoto was victorious in a see-sawing **4-2** match (11-8, 11-9, 11-7, 3-11, 2-11, 11-6). Taking down **Lee Sangsu** from **South Korea** in the semi-final, Harimoto was again victorious **4-2**.



This brought the 14-year-old head to head with former world number one, **Zhang Jike** in the final. Losing the first 2 games against such an experienced opponent would fray the nerves of many, but Harimoto is made of sterner stuff. The young gun won in a thriller, serving an ace on match point, 9-11, 8-11, 11-9, 11-4, 10-12, 11-7, 13-11.

And all of this against the background of the **Women’s Singles** match which had just been completed. **Mima Ito** had a tough battle in her semi final match against **Chen Xingtong** from **China**. Losing the first **3** games, and down **4-9** in the fourth, something clicked. Ito won the match 8-11, 9-11, 6-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-7, 11-7.

Progressing to the final, Ito came up against China’s **Wang Menyu**, who is the current world number one. The pair had played each other on five occasions in the past, with Wang winning all of them. Not this time. In a match of swinging fortunes, Ito prevailed, 11-7, 12-10, 8-11, 11-7, 4-11, 12-10.



Harimoto and Ito will both still be teenagers when the **Tokyo Olympics** come around in **2020**.

AND THE LOSER WAS ...

So now that we've talked about the winners, let's talk about a loser.

In the opening round of the Men's Singles qualification tournament that preceded the **2018 ITTF World Tour Japan Open**, a Japanese player was beaten by Hong Kong's **Ho Kwan Kit** (11-6, 11-9, 11-7, 15-13). The player concerned was **Sora Matsushima**.

Now, normally this would have been a fairly uneventful match. The scorecard shows a four-nil loss, but not a bad loss. I mean, going down 13-15 in the final game shows that there was a struggle involved. Ho Kwan Kit is currently ranked number **37** in the world, so to beat an unranked player 4-0 should not raise any eyebrows. But consider this; his opponent was born on **Sunday the 29th of April, 2007**.

That's right. Sora Matsushima has only just turned *11 years old*.

While Sora played with the devil-may-care attitude of an 11-year-old, his talent was obvious. It's in his genes.

Sora's parents, **Takashi** and **Yumiko** were both serious players who, while university students, made the Mixed Doubles semi-finals of the **Japanese Championships** in **2001**. And for the history buffs, Sora is the grand-nephew of **Tokio Tasaka**, the winner of *six* World Championship medals.



Tasaka's last World Championship medal was in 1977 at Birmingham, where he was runner-up in the Mixed Doubles with **Sachiko Yokota**. And in a strange coincidence, Yokota was the Tournament Director at the 2018 Japanese Open.

Observers in Japan have made the brave statement that Sora Matsushima is ahead of where **Tomokazu Harimoto** was at the same age. He has won the same **Under 8** and **Under 10** titles as Harimoto, and seems on track to win the same **Under 12** titles.

His coaches say that Matsushima has the mental toughness to progress to great things. But for the time-being, let's just enjoy watching Sora play table tennis, and let Sora enjoy playing table tennis.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR TICKETS YET?

At the end of July, the **ITTF Australian World Tour** event is coming to **Geelong**. This event will run from **Tuesday the 24th** to **Sunday the 29th** and will feature many of the world's top ranked players. With entries now closed, there are **36** of the top 50 Men, including **15** of the top 20, and **30** of the top 50 Women, including **17** of the top 20 attending, including **Tomokazu Harimoto** and **Mima Ito**, both mentioned above.

And don't forget that there will be extra matches this year with the inclusion of **Mixed Doubles** into the program.

With ticket prices starting at just **\$6.19** for the Qualifying sessions, and finals tickets still available for only **\$32**, this is an event that you should not miss. You can view prices and buy tickets at www.pingskills.com or speak to **Glenn** or **Matt** for more details.

TABLE TENNIS AMERICAN-STYLE

You would think that table tennis is the same all over the world, wouldn't you? But we discovered that the American table tennis scene is a bit different to what we are used to in Australia. I'm not saying it's better or worse... just different.

Our first encounter with table tennis in the USA was with the very serious side of it. We made the journey from **Washington D.C.** to **Gaithersburg, Maryland** with a very chatty **UBER** driver. I had been warned by family and friends to keep my political views quiet for fear of being detained, deported or shot, but I needn't have worried, as our driver was far more vocal about their situation than I ever would have been.

Arriving at the **Maryland Table Tennis Center** on a Saturday night we met with **Larry Hodges** and watched some of the junior squad training, and I have to admit, I was very surprised by the depth of talent on display. Larry, as some of you will know, is the person behind the tabletenniscoaching.com website, as well as the author of **8** books on table tennis, a USATT Hall-of-Fame inductee, and a host of other accolades.

Originally started in 1992, **MDTTC** was the first full-time training centre of its type in the USA and has been used as the model for many other successful facilities since then. Open 7-days-a-week, the students get excellent training, with some being picked up by staff from the centre directly from school for their training sessions.



The **8 full-time** and **4 part-time** coaches include **3** who are **USATT Hall-of-Fame** members, and several who were former members of the **Chinese National Squad**. It's not cheap. Private lessons for non-members can cost up to **US\$80** per hour (\$110 Australian). Group training sessions like the one we watched are a much more reasonable **US\$15**.

But the results are clear. While we were there for the Saturday evening training, we watched the **number 3 Under 15** girl in the U.S, and the **number 1 Under 9-year-old** boy in the country training. We were advised that if we came back the next day, we would be able to see a much higher standard of training.

I'm not sure how much higher they could have gone. The enthusiasm of the young players was infectious. Watching a nine-year-old who expected to get shots back from anywhere on the court was fascinating. The look on his face when the impossible didn't happen was amusing to me, and showed that for him, impossible didn't matter. I was impressed not only by their shot execution, but by their shot *selection*. Most nine-year-old's would be happy to get the ball on the table. These kids were strategizing the game and making the correct shots for their situation. One in particular would not be out of place in our A-Grade. And no, I'm not kidding.

This facility was opened by Larry on the "*if you build it, they will come*" principle. Many said that there wasn't enough interest in table tennis to warrant such a facility, but there are now nearly **100** spread throughout the U.S., many based on the experiences gained by Larry and his team at MDTTC, and aided by Larry's willingness to disseminate his ideas for the good of the sport.

It may have taken a while to grow the quality of player, but look at the **ITTF News pages**, particularly in the Junior and Cadet reports. More and more American players are being mentioned. This model is different to the standard club style we are used to in Australia, but if we want to get young talent onto the world stage, perhaps this is where we need to be headed. It took them time. It would take us time. But that's no reason to not try.

Our next step into the world of table tennis American-style came in the form of the **SPiN** club in **Chicago**. Imagine if a table tennis club and a really trendy, up-scale nightclub had baby. SPiN would be the result. It has table tennis, drinks, food, drinks from the bar, fluorescent lighting, drinks delivered to your table, staff employed to pick up the balls for you... did I mention drinks?



This club, located right in the business district attracts the office workers wanting to wind down after a hard day, the beautiful people of Chicago, party-goers, as well as the serious table tennis enthusiast. Opening at 4:00pm most weekdays and midday on the weekends, this is the perfect way to get the casual player to think of table tennis in a more positive light.

They are popping up everywhere. A new one is due to open in Washington D.C. later this year, and others are located in major cities of the USA and Canada.

Would they work here? Well, more and more pubs are replacing pool tables with table tennis tables, so the interest is starting to grow, but it would require a serious investment. Like a "Shark Tank" serious investment.

As our trip continued, we found ourselves at the opposite end of the table tennis scale. Researching table tennis facilities in New Mexico and Arizona made me realise how lucky we are. New Mexico is about one and a half times the area of Victoria. My research could only find six clubs in the state, the largest of which had 19 members. We would have stopped for a hit, but none of them were open on the nights we were there.

They may be small, but they have a sense of humour. Los Alamos is the New Mexico town where the atomic bomb was developed in the 1940's. The table tennis club's webpage lists their history as:- *"There was light, matter (and anti-matter), and some time later, the Los Alamos Table Tennis club"*.

Arizona is roughly the same area and a comparable population to Victoria. Our travels through northern Arizona was similarly devoid of table tennis facilities. Only one club was listed in the area, and it was a case of phone someone and they would try to organise a practice partner. Many of the small clubs in the south-west states we investigated play a format of "winner-stays-on", rather than having organised matches as we are used to.

So, is the American style of club something we should try to emulate? Probably not. Is the American-style training facility something we should try to emulate? Definitely. The road will be long, painful, and possibly costly, but if we want to progress our players onto the world stage, we will need to bite the bullet and do it.

AUSSIE SUCCESS AT WORLD VETS

As proof that age doesn't matter, Australians have brought home medals from the **2018 Veterans World Championships** held recently in **Las Vegas**.

Silver in the **Men's Over 85 Doubles** went to **Anthony Herbert** from **Queensland** and **Hans Pappon** from **Victoria**. **Betty Bird** from **South Australia** teamed up with Jean White from England to take out the **Silver** medal in the **Women's Over 80 Doubles**.

Igor Klaf and **Buddy Reid** from **Victoria** won the **Gold** medal in the **Men's Over 75 Doubles**.

Our congratulations go to all competitors who did their best to represented their country and to support the struggling businesses of Las Vegas.

JULY TOURNAMENTS

International table tennis comes to our back door this month with the **Australian Open** being played in **Geelong** (as discussed in the article above).

Locally, from the **8th** to the **14th**, the **National Senior Championships** will be on in **Mornington**.

The **Victorian Open Veterans** will be played at **MSAC** on the **14th of July**. Hopefully some of the players freshly returned from the World Vets in Las Vegas will be back and ready to go for this one.

On the **28th**, **Albury/Wodonga** will host the **Victorian Open Junior Championships**, followed the next day by the **Albury/Wodonga Senior Open**.

ON THE WEB

www.sportsflu.com covers tennis, badminton and table tennis, and does it very well. Covering training tips sourced from a number of different sites, as well as news and information on some of the lesser publicised tournaments, this site is kept right up to date and is well 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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