



# **ACROSS THE NET**

## **Melton Table Tennis**

**March 2018**

**Edition 43**

### **2018 UNDERWAY, OZ OPEN MOVES, COMM GAMES TEAM, & GRABBING ON TIGHT**

In this edition, we discuss how good we are getting, prepare for a major tournament just down the road, announce the players for our Commonwealth Games teams, and work out the best way to hold it and what to do with it.

### **MTTA CLOSE TO CAPACITY**

It was just fantastic to walk into the playing hall on the first night of the new season and see so many new faces. Every team on the newly expanded **C Grade** has a player who is new to the club, as well new players in other grades and the return of some who have been absent for some time.

The expanded numbers has caused us to go with a different format for both A Grade and C Grade, with an expanded A Grade being split into A1 and A2, and eight equal C Grade teams being split into 2 divisions. It remains to be seen how successful these changes will be, but it will be seriously analysed before the Winter season to make sure we have the best plans in place for the rest of the year.

And wasn't it pleasing to see the return of **Craig Archman**. Craig's recovery from a stroke has been a long one, but I'm sure that being back at the table and amongst friends will give him a real boost.

The newcomers will very soon settle in to our routine, and this short season will give the selection committee a better understand of abilities in preparation for the longer seasons later in the year.

We're on our way for 2018, and it's going to be a great ride.

### **THE THINGS YOU SAY**

On the last practice night before the start of the season, I was busy rushing around organising the Handicap Challenge matches. Trying not to miss anyone, I went up and down the hall asking players if they intended to play in the handicap competition on that night.

As I was making my way back to the desk, I spied **Chris Addis** rolling in and quickly asked, "*Chris. Handicap?*" The answer came back with a smile. "*Obviously.*"

I'll phrase the question differently next time.



### **ITTF AUSTRALIAN OPEN WORLD TOUR EVENT**

After originally being scheduled to be held on the Gold Coast, the **ITTF Platinum Australian Open** has been moved and, luckily for us, it's been moved to **Geelong**. Yes, the lovely coastal town once known as Sleepy Hollow and now the second largest city in the state will be hosting the biggest table tennis competition Australia has ever seen.

Exaggeration? I don't think so. As one of the 12 World Tour events it was bound to attract some top players, but as one of only 6 Platinum events, which carry bonus points, we are sure to have the top players from around the world cuddling koalas, kissing kangaroos, and getting romantic with redbacks.

The venue is yet to be announced, but rest assured we'll keep you informed. With nearly 60 tables tennis clubs in Victoria alone, ticket sales are bound to be brisk, but with a competition of this calibre being played only an hour's drive away, it's one that you shouldn't miss.

### **ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL GOOD FRIDAY APPEAL**

It seems a long way off now, but time passes quickly. At the end of the month MTTA will again be holding a fund-raising event on the Thursday night before **Good Friday** (*Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup> of March*). Last year's event was an absolute hoot, with plenty of fun being had in the various games and special events organised.

Last year we were happy to have **TTV CEO** and former Oceania champion, **Dennis Makaling** spending time with us and demonstrating his skills. Who will grace our tables this year?

*This is not a competition night.* Everyone is welcome. The aim is to have lots of fun and to raise money for a wonderful cause. Last year, MTTA donated nearly **\$500** to the **Good Friday Appeal**, and this year we hope to do even better. All money raised on the night goes directly to the **Royal Children's Hospital**.

### **COMMONWEALTH GAMES TEAM ANNOUNCED**

As announced on the ITTF website, the Australian Commonwealth Games Table Tennis team has been announced. And while it's not surprising to us, it's worth noting that of the 12 players to represent Australia at the Games, 7 of them are from Victoria.

The Men's Teams and Individual players will be **Heming Hu** (VIC), **David Powell** (VIC), **Chris Yan** (NSW), **Trent Carter** (VIC), and **Kane Townsend** (QLD), with **Barak Mizrachi** (VIC) playing in the newly added Men's Class 6 – 10 Singles for Para athletes.

The Women's Teams and Individual players will be **Jian Fang Lay** (VIC), **Melissa Tapper** (VIC), **Tracy Feng** (NSW), **Miao Miao** (VIC), **Michelle Bromley** (NSW), with **Melissa Tapper** joining **Andrea McDonnell** (QLD) in the Women's Class 6 – 10 Singles.

And yes, you did notice that Melissa Tapper's name appears twice on the list. Milly will be playing in the Teams and Individual matches, as she has done at the **Rio Olympics** and at the **Glasgow Commonwealth Games**, and in the Class 6-10 Singles for Para's as she has done most recently at the **Rio Paralympics**. At the very first opportunity, Melissa will become the first table tennis player to compete in able-bodied and Para matches at the same Commonwealth Games. Well done, Milly.

## EUROPEAN TOP 16 TOURNAMENT



*They all went down to Montreux, on the Lake Geneva shoreline  
To hit smashes with their forehand; they do it all the time.  
Timo Boll and Dimitrij were the last two in the hall.  
Timo won in straight sets, proving he's the best of all.*

And if the musical reference escapes you, go ask an adult.

Yes, the **European Top 16 Tournament** was held in **Montreux, Switzerland** during February. Sometimes it's easy to overlook European table tennis. With China having been so dominant in recent decades, and the rise of the Japanese youth to elite status, our focus can be drawn to the East. But in simple terms, the Men's Teams Rankings show that European teams fill **5** of the top 10 places, and it's **4** of the top 10 in the Women's.

The Men's finalists, both **German**, were current world No. 1 **Dimitrij Ovtcharov**, and current world No. 3 **Timo Boll**, with Boll reigning supreme in 4 sets. The Women's final had **Romanian Bernadette Szocs** triumphant over world No. 10, **Li Jie** from **The Netherlands** in 5 sets.

And for winning the premier championship in Europe they were presented with..... a panda!?



## A BRIEF LESSON IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

When the **ITTF** and the first **World Championships** were established in **1926**, **India** was the only non-European country playing. It would be over 20 years before the rest of the Asian countries got involved at that level, so for a long time table tennis really was a European game. And the best at it were the Hungarians.

**Hungary** won a staggering **115** medals of the **316** on offer between the first world championship and the beginning of World War II. That's **36%** of all medals going to one country.

It's not hard to see why when names like **Maria Mednyanszky**, **Anna Sipos**, **Laszlo Bellak**, **Miklos Szabados**, and **Viktor Barna** keep on popping up on the lists.

As good as China? No. But better than any other country up to this point in time.

So if you're ever taking part in a pub quiz and they ask the question, "*Which country has won the second-most table tennis world championships medals?*", you'll know what the answer is. Don't laugh. It could happen.

## **GET A GRIP - BUT WHICH ONE ?**

In the not so distant past, whenever you thought of Asian table tennis players, you immediately thought of the **penhold** grip. Very few Asian players used the **shakehand** grip, and even fewer non-Asian players used the penhold. I'm not here to pass judgement on which grip is better, or to try to convince you which one you should use, but there are some facts you need to know.



It was long considered that the penhold players had a weakness on their backhand side. This was the case when the penhold style utilised only one side of the blade. With the development of the *reverse backhand*, this apparent weakness has largely been eliminated. The perceived advantage of the penhold grip was in balls played close to the body where there was less of a “cross-over” point between forehand and backhand. Shakehand players were vulnerable to balls hit close to the body, however had an advantage on the sides where they could generate almost equal power on both forehand and backhand.

The Shakehand grip was very probably the first grip used in table tennis, as it was a very minor variation on the grip used for other racket sports like tennis. After considerable research I have been unable to find details of when and by whom the penhold style was developed. Table tennis had been introduced into **Japan** by **1904**, and was widely played in **China** by the early **1930's**, so it seems likely that it was developed in one of these two countries. The great Hungarian player of the 1930's, **Anna Sipos** originally used the penhold grip before converting to shakehand as her game developed.

**58** World Singles Championships have gone to Asian players. Of these, **37** were won by **penhold** players and **21** by **shakehand** players. But here's where it gets interesting. In the **40** years between the first victory by an Asian player in **1952** and **1992**, only **2** Asian players using the shakehand grip were crowned World Champion. The other **35** singles championships won by Asian players during those years all went to penhold players. Since **1992**, **21** Singles Championships have gone to Asian players, and **19** of them have been Shakehand players.

Wow. That's quite a turnaround. But what's happening now? In the Top 50 Men's players as at February 2018, there are **25** Asian players, but only **2 penhold players**. In the Top 50 Women's for the same period, there are **37** Asian players. There is **1 penhold player**, and she is from **Germany**. Of the 50 best men and 50 best women, we only have **3 penhold players**.

Is it a dying art? And if so, why? For so many years it was the dominant style of world champions, but for the past couple of decades it has dropped to near obscurity. It can't be that Asian players are mimicking the non-Asian players winning all the world championships, because the vast majority of these are still being won by the Asians.

So the revolution has come from within their own ranks. And with top level coaches all over Asia, you would think that they would encourage young players to use the best grip for their style of play. If the penhold grip is best suited to attacking players with fast footwork (which it is), you would think that the majority of attacking players would be using it. The only conclusion I can draw is that the shakehand grip is being seen as superior by the vast majority of top level players and coaches. And if it's good enough for them...

## **MARCH TOURNAMENTS**

I always thought that Labour Day was a celebration especially reserved for women experiencing childbirth, but it appears I was mistaken. It's actually all about table tennis.

On the **Labour Day** weekend, Croydon will be holding their annual 3 days of tournaments. **Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> of March** will be the **Croydon Masters Junior Open**, followed by the **Veterans Open** on **Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup>**, with the **Senior Open** and **Para Open** on **Monday the 12<sup>th</sup>**. If you haven't tried tournaments before, this is an excellent one to attend, as it is one of the few which go down to **Division 6**, giving lower ranked players a chance to get involved.

**Saturday the 31<sup>st</sup> of March** sees the running of the **Mornington Junior Open** followed on **Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> of April** by the **Mornington Senior Open**, but that may just be a joke.

## **ON THE WEB**

I found some very interesting articles at [www.tabletennisstore.ga](http://www.tabletennisstore.ga). They provide reviews of blades, rubbers, tables and other pieces of equipment as well, but they also list some articles about training techniques, technological advancements in our sport, interviews and other items well worth a read.

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

Are you a member of our facebook page? Search for **Melton Table Tennis** on Facebook and join in our conversations. Don't forget, you can find our web page at [www.meltontabletennis.com.au](http://www.meltontabletennis.com.au) Make us your home page.

## **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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