

TENNIS EAST GIPPSLAND

2008/09 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Wow! It has been another busy year.

This AGM has been called earlier than the usual July date to bring forward important Tennis East Gippsland ("TEG") Regional matters to the attention of associations and clubs prior their own AGM's.

It comes on the back of an exhilarating Country Conference two days ago.

Attendance at Regional Meetings and Forums

Some considerable time and effort is put in to put on these events. Attendance is not compulsory, but recent year's lack of it undermines the efforts of the Regional Council, which dates back to 1973/74, in engaging in fruitful and open discussion on points of interest, participation and representation.

I refer you to the 2009 Country Conference Report to evaluate Goulburn Region's solution to their similar problem.

Contribution of Effort with Region Events

There is anecdotal evidence that more people are accessing our central point of communication – the TEG website. There has been an increase in individual awareness of Regional activities from parents of juniors in that nominations for events are coming in directly, bypassing associations and clubs.

Whilst there is always room for improvement from associations and clubs in general, the positive efforts of the newly invigorated Lakes Entrance TC are worth highlighting, best evidenced by their successful publicizing of the Hot Shots Challenge at their first foray into the Junior Masters Circuit Lead-in tournament.

There remains that expectation Regions support established and emerging Tennis Victoria programs ("TV") and with the goodwill of associations and clubs this starts support of our Region's activities are a good starting point.

TV and TEG communication is now at such a high level the "I didn't know" response is no longer any excuse.

Our associations and clubs have terrific access to our activities, conveyed to them in a regular and timely manner, and it is the Regional Council's expectation that they actively promote participation, and not simply put a notice on a notice board . . . as some clubs do.

Not fielding junior teams in 2008 in the Wayne Arthurs Cup (10/U) and Region/Association Challenge (12/U, 14/U, 16/U) has been rectified in 2009 through direct interaction with parents.

The lack of an East Gippsland team in the 2009 Inter Regional Championships in January embarrassingly drew a "please explain" from Tennis Victoria, together with two other Regions, and raised some serious discussion at the Australian Open Forum in January. If this event was to wane below the current eight supporters there is a real prospect that scarce TV funds are directed to other better supported programs.

We simply can't let this be repeated so let's make a supreme effort to send a team to the Inter-Regional Championships at Benalla (Goulburn Region) on 8th – 10th January 2010.

The absence of our own Intra-Regional Championships, reintroduced in 2007/08 after a recess back from 1991/92, through insufficient entries, was disappointing, and reflects on our commitment at the post 16/U level.

The Regional Council continues to work hard to provide our members with:

- a well defined Player Pathway;
- Junior Summer Circuit of Lead-in Tournaments since 2004/05 culminating in a Masters Final in 10/U, 12/U, 14/U and 16/U age groups. This is widely seen as a forerunner of similar Masters Series throughout Country Victoria;
- Teams in TV Junior Cups and Challenges (note Selection Criteria on website);

- support of the Gippsland Sports Academy tennis program, the first in Country Victoria, and now one of four such initiatives;
- support of the Bairnsdale Optus Junior Tour tournament in September/October,

all of which have been significant in providing our kids preparation for the next level of tournament competition.

The Region's Name

Whilst municipally our Region more or less covers the Wellington and East Gippsland Shires, it can be a bone of contention that we are known simply as the "East Gippsland" Region of Tennis Victoria. The Regional Council enjoyed more support as "Region 13".

Incidentally, the name "East Gippsland" for our region was a choice of Tennis Victoria, not this Regional Council.

Perhaps it may be timely to introduce the notion of a name change to be "more acceptable" and "encompassing" in describing our constituent associations and clubs, and help protect our future autonomy. Could I suggest a competition to find a more suitable title?

Country Conference

Along with Julie Glynn, Region Secretary, I attended our Regional Council at the 2009 Country Conference at Grace Park TC last Friday 22nd May 2009 along side around 50 attendees.

The conference reviews and combines the efforts of Tennis Victoria, Regional Tennis Councils and Regional Development Officers. Julie is our Region's Regional Development Officer in the absence of a Regional Sports Assembly in this part of the world.

It was a jam packed program and emerging issues, which are covered in the Country Conference 2009 Roundup, are an interesting read for all committed Regional disciples.

TV produced a report of membership numbers in our Region and it suggests that some clubs may not have remitted, or have understated, their player affiliation fees.

If this is the case, this should be a big concern to the committee members of those clubs as they can be personally liable for injuries sustained at their venue. The TV affiliation provides that cover.

A number of years ago, a member of one of our affiliates had a five figure claim against them on a joint liability accident. The club had properly reported and paid for its member numbers, and so was covered.

Where would your club be, and in the absence of the club having that money the committee members, would be if such a claim arose?

Regional Pennant

As I reported at our last AGM, the former TEG pennant floundered in its sixth year and went into recess in 2005/06.

The enthusiastic promise of the reintroduction of the Pennant in the last summer of 2008/09, following support of Sale TC with three to four teams and initial indication of three teams from Bairnsdale TC, was dashed at the eleventh hour when the latter withdrew their support. Other indicative club possibilities were not then required to make a final decision to participate, or not.

This came as a disappointment to a number of players aspiring to play better tennis. Earlier ground work has been undertaken by the Regional Council to attempt a successful reintroduction for the 2009/10 summer season.

Glenn Schuback is coordinating the upcoming season's attempt. If you are unsure of your club's position do not hesitate to contact him.

I trust this will be seen as a positive step towards providing the best competition in our Region.

Regional Forum at Lakes Entrance in February 2009

A productive Forum was conducted during Lakes Entrance TC first foray into the Regional Junior Circuit Lead-in. The minutes are in News on the website but the significant outcome was a desire to adopt a more solid Regional view at association and club levels. We trust this will occur in 2009/10.

Representative Teams

This program has become quite large over the years and our kids have certainly put the events on their radar.

Our TEG selected representative junior teams achieved the following results in 2008:

Alicia Molik Cup – Kooyong (12/U Boys and Girls) – coming 14th
Association/Regional Challenge – Bendigo (12/U, 14/U, 16/U Boys and Girls) – *no team this year*
Frank Sedgman Cup – Bendigo (11/U Boys and Girls) – *no team this year*
John Fitzgerald Cup - Ballarat (13/U Boys) – coming 3rd
Foundation Cup - Bairnsdale (13/U Girls) – coming 9th (**WON** 2006)
Ambassadors Cups – Horsham (15/U Boys and Girls) – coming 10th
Wayne Arthurs Cup – Kooyong (10/U Boys and Girls) – coming 16th
Country Cup (17/U Boys and Girls) – not played since 2007 (**WON** 2007).

Results can be viewed at <http://www.tennis.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=3&pagelid=11772>.

We entered no teams in the Inter Regional Championships for the first time, and we had no teams at Country Week.

Junior Circuit

Lead-in Circuit tournaments were conducted at Maffra, Lakes Entrance and Sale. Bairnsdale was washed out, and a replacement date could not be identified. The Masters Final was held at Bairnsdale. Results can be viewed on the website.

The Circuit is being brought forward a month in 2009/10 to commence in October to avoid a Masters Finals clash with other winter sports in April 2010.

Communication

Repeating the last two year's comments:

"Whilst comments continue about not knowing what is going on in the region, the regional calendar of events continues to be published on our website. Gathering information from clubs is a little like drawing hens' teeth and I implore clubs to forward their events and functions particulars for inclusion to make the calendar more useful for all of us."

We find email is the most effective form of communication and we now use it with our website solely, so if you or your colleagues want/need to personally receive TEG updates simply advise email addresses to be added to our mailing list.

The issue of privacy of recipients was recently raised by one club. We are in the process of developing a formal Communication Policy, including for emails (eg: addresses to be placed in the Bcc (blind carbon copy) for nobody to see them, rather than the Cc section).

We invite your contribution towards this Policy.

Appointment of Association/Club responsible persons

We are aware that some of our communications don't get a regular spot at association or club general committee meetings, and that internal issues often take over available time.

It is for these reasons that we have asked that consideration be given to formally appointing an association/club committee person to receive, disseminate, and act upon, these reports. This was reiterated at the Lakes Entrance Forum, however few names have been formally notified.

We would prefer this person is not the club coach, even if the coach is on your senior or junior committee, as it simply places them in an unenviable "conflict of interest" situation.

We do, however, understand there may be nobody else in your organisation willing to take on this task.

Gippsland Sports Academy Awardees

At presentation night in April, Stephanie Barnett was awarded the prestigious David Drane Encouragement Award (ahead of nominees from nine sports). Jackson Varney was the Tennis nominee for the Tom Forsythe Award (winner Jeremy Meyer, Swimming, for second year in a row).

Australian Open Ball Kids Identification Program

For the first time, certain regions held round one identification sessions recently.

Whilst this innovation gave us little fore warning, juniors did respond in numbers and attended respective sessions at Bairnsdale and Sale. Interestingly, two of the applicants were not tennis players.

Thanks to Julian Arnold, Ola Luczak, Mike Spruzen and Nick Board for their assistance.

The following juniors successfully negotiated this phase -

Bairnsdale session:	Ben Crowe, Tom Deller, Ben Jones, Lexie Joyce, Lily Rooks
Sale session:	Jami Cashman, Meagan Mogridge, Christopher Nowotny, Hailey Shanahan, Alex Trett, Sarah Trett

Challenge Ladders

On top of the European development now known as Hot Shot Challenges in Australia introduce pre-pennant and pre-tournament standard kids to tennis, comes the phenomenon from America online Challenge Ladders.

Challenge Ladders are similar to those conducted manually at a few clubs, whereby players are encouraged to challenge for spots in their own time, however, they generally fall away because the organizer lacks time, or loses interest. As an online system, and once set up, these really run themselves and they have a multitude of other communication activities the younger set love.

Challenge Ladders have gathered momentum across America as work habits become more demanding on players' time, just like here, and long season pennant competitions fail to attract the former high numbers, just like here. I see them as actually stimulating pennant activity.

There is, of course, a cost, but I also see a potential for clubs to make a little money whilst benefiting from the automatic standard setting of players over a period of time. If the American experience is anything to go by, these will become a fixture in the Australian scene in the not too distant future. Isn't it said that we run two or three years behind America in most things.

I have investigated a number of these, the best of which seems to be "QuickLadder". I have had a one hour internet conference and demonstration with the President of CoolCoyotes -see www.QuickLadder.com, and I'm confident that as a Region we could negotiate a reasonable price if clubs wanted to come on board.

I have also spoken at length to the soon to be released Australian version "TheChallengeLadder". Their system has been operating in the Canterbury Bankstown district in NSW, and is soon to be expanded across the country - see www.thechallengeladder.com, or the Tennis NSW website. The initial pricing they are seeking is a bit expensive, but I'm also confident we could negotiate.

I'll circulate details in the coming days and look forward to receiving your comments.

John Glynn

President Tennis East Gippsland
24/5/2009