

Ainslie Tennis Club - President's Report 2020

What a year! We started with Open Court Sessions which failed to deliver the cross promotion with the Australian Open and faded away with the bushfire smoke. We managed to conduct a few sessions but numbers were small and we couldn't see any benefit and lots of negatives. As a result we advised Tennis ACT that we would not be running Sessions again.

Bush Fire Smoke & COVID19

The bush fire smoke temporarily stopped people playing tennis and our book a court revenues took a hit. Then just as the smoke cleared and bookings picked up, COVID19 struck and our year changed dramatically. By late March we were preparing for the worst and had closed our facility down. As a result, late March, all of April and early May our court revenues dried up and we started spending funds on cleaning products and tools to counter COVID. Over 2020 I was able to develop and subsequently update a COVID Safety Plan for the Club which enabled the courts to open and remain open as soon as we received advice from Tennis ACT that we could do so.

Revenues and Coaching

By mid May our courts re-opened for one on one coaching and then for singles and as a result revenues started to pick up. Then two things happened that boosted our revenues. First was the introduction of our new web page courtesy of Tennis Australia which offered us the opportunity to move memberships to rolling 12 month events rather than for calendar year. This seemed to encourage new memberships and as a result a normally dry period for membership revenues was replaced with a constant flow of funds.

Secondly, with restrictions on outdoor activities due to social distancing requirements, tennis and golf became the go to sports for exercise and our book a court revenues started to grow. The Treasurer's Report will provide details, but suffice it to say that Ainslie, along with all Canberra tennis clubs, saw record court hires in winter and spring from both members and those happy to pay to hire our courts.

Another factor that helped with boosting our court hire revenues was the implementation of the new coaching agreement with Active Tennis Coaching and its principal, Myles Emery which commenced in February 2020. Coaching revenues across 2020 were in line with forecasts that the Committee considered in late 2019 when we decided to accept Myles' proposal for a new coaching arrangement. Not only did our revenues from coaching double when compared with the previous arrangement, but also we now have an active coaching provider who is delighted to serve on the Committee and to help out with working bees and club promotional activities. This has been a win-win for both the Club and Myles.

Newsletters

2020 saw the publication of the Club's new newsletter format. Unfortunately we didn't publish as many editions as we would have liked, but we now have a format that is easy to read and which provides lots of relevant information to members.

Presidents' Forums

Tennis ACT continues to conduct seasonal Forums which first started in 2018, but by early 2020 it had become clear to a number of club presidents, including myself, that the forums were not dealing with a number of problems facing the clubs. As a result the presidents of North Woden, Kippax and myself encouraged the creation of a Club Presidents' Forum, with the initial focus being how clubs could raise sufficient funds to cover existing and impending infrastructure costs such as the replacement of existing court surfaces. By the end of 2020 the Forum had become established and both the Tennis ACT Board and staff are now working closely with the Presidents to try and find a workable solution.

Clubhouse Rebuild

2020 saw the completion of the rebuilding of our clubhouse which had been subject to a major termite attack. This was a project that cost in the region of \$55,000 and was funded by existing funds, a Capital Works Grant from the ACT Government and fantastic fund raising work by the Club's fundraising committee headed up by our Asset Manager, Mary Ryan. The clubhouse was officially re-launched as part of the Club's very successful Xmas function in December and has been

commemorated through a photo poster which now hangs on the clubhouse wall. The poster especially thanks Neil Hendy (the former Asset Manager) and Mary Ryan for the extraordinary effort they made in project managing the rebuild process.

New Ainslie Tennis Web Site

Tennis Australia utilised the COVID down period for tennis in Victoria to concentrate on delivering a universal website to all tennis clubs. The site, known as Club Spark, replaced Ainslie's previous wix site and offered the Club a number of benefits including an simplified rolling membership system; a link between membership, book a court and our payment system on Stripe; a simplified system to send out newsletters to all members; and a platform to provide interested readers with details about the Club and its history.

The Neil Hendy Cups

With the re-opening of the courts the Committee considered and agreed to my proposal to introduce an in-house competition based loosely on the soccer FA Cup model. In recognition of his long standing contribution to the Club, the Committee named the competition the Neil Hendy Cups. A sub-committee chaired by Kat Knope, was formed to further develop and introduce the Cups and ultimately it consisted of a mix of round robin and knockout events across singles and doubles with trophies awarded at the Xmas function across a range of categories including opens, women's and seniors. I look forward to an even bigger and better event in 2021.

Xmas Function

The Club introduced a Xmas function several years ago involving a one day tennis doubles event and a bbq for all interested members. Up till 2019 this had attracted around 15 players and a few non-playing members. In 2020 it was decided that the function would start with the finals of some of the Neil Hendy Cups, utilise the Open Court Sessions equipment to provide members and guests with the opportunity to try their hand at tennis overseen by our club coach, Myles Emery, hand out the Cups to the various winners and have a free bbq and drinks. In addition, we invited players and officials from the Braddon Tennis Club to attend. We estimated that over the course of the event we had near on

100 attendees and the most successful club event of at least the last 20 years.

Membership

We commenced 2020 with a membership system based on calendar years. As a result 2020 started with about 20 members having renewed for the year ahead and we spent the next two months reminding members to renew. With the introduction of Club Spark in mid 2020 the Committee agree to take advantage of rolling memberships - that is members receive 12 months' membership from the day they renew or initially join. By the end of 2020 we had 85 financial members of whom 34 were new members. With the change over from calendar to 12 monthly memberships, we faced the same annual situation of many members not renewing till January or February 2021. However, by April 2021 we had 129 members and all existing members from now on will receive advice that their membership is about to expire shortly before it does and this will encourage everyone to renew straight away rather than procrastinate.

2021 and beyond?

With COVID seemingly under control the challenges for the club in the next few years seem to fall into several categories. Firstly it will be about maintaining an effective Committee. Several committee members, including myself, have been very active over long periods of time and we need to think seriously about having an effective succession plan..Secondly, while our finances are currently very healthy, we are not in a position to fully finance the work that makes up the strategic asset management plan. Replacing the surface on court 3, changing the court 1 lights to LED, replacing the court fences, building a hitting wall, landscaping the area beside the clubhouse to encourage greater use of the courts, and adding a fourth court are all things that need to be planned for and funds raised. The 2021 Committee will need to be strategic in its thinking and activities if the Club is to continue to flourish.

Stephen Ryan