

1. Where did you grow up and what are some of your earliest memories playing tennis?

I grew up in the sleepy hamlet of Blampied, my earliest memory of playing tennis was in the under 10's on a Saturday morning.

2. When did you first play tennis at the Association? And who got you involved?

I estimate it was around 1982 when I first began to play tennis. It was just what our family did on a Saturday. I wouldn't be surprised if 90% of the district played tennis at the time. I was around 12 when I started filling in on a Saturday afternoon as Mum was doing the canteen and I was just there.

3. Describe yourself as a tennis player?

What an interesting question! Myself as a tennis player...the obvious would be firstly vocal, animated, determined, fair and absolutely no style. I get the odd comment on a Saturday "You must be having a win; I didn't hear too much today." My so-called descriptive comments usually only relate to how I'm playing not the score line. So, I could be getting absolutely flogged and you wouldn't hear me too much, just as long as I was playing OK.

4. What are some of your highlights across your playing days?

I have three moments that I remember vividly. Firstly, was winning my first trophy when I was U10 in the Mazda tournament which I think was played on the March long weekend. Second was winning a premiership in senior tennis when I was 14. The third was playing junior Country week in C grade (I wasn't some peoples favourite). It came to the finals and A & B grade made it, but C grade didn't. Desley Cosgrave in A Grade does her ankle, and I was they only available replacement. We win the Semi's and into the Grand final we go... Back then they played rubbers in the mixed and Chris McKay and I were playing the last sets. We win the first set...lose the second set...we are 5-2 down in the last set and its as hot as a gas cooker. Mum comes out with a towel and drink at the change of ends and says" If you win, we win, if you lose, we lose". Would you believe Chris and I got up and won the set 9-7 as no tie breaker in the last set. The crowd was huge that day and probably the closest I will ever get to having the feeling of playing in an Australian Open...

5. Who are some of the best players you've shared a court with over the years?

The two players that come to mind immediately are Jan Hives and Kelly Swift. Both seemed to float around the court and hit a low, hard and deep drive consistently. I was happier playing with them than against.

6. What did you enjoy most about playing on the grass courts?

Our grass courts are the best surface to play on. They are not harsh on the body especially when you dive for the ball. (I do this all the time Haha) They appear to be cooler on your feet than hard courts and to add to the challenge they play differently every week.

7. Who have been some of the most enjoyable players to play with? And can you recall any funny stories from one of your matches?

I have had many laughs on the tennis court with other players over the years and also a few foot in mouth episodes. Poor Tracey Holmes had an experience on the hard courts one day when I hit a return, which was going out and I yelled to Tracey to hit it and without a pause called myself a cow. This came out as "Hit it you Cow". In recent times I have also managed to get stuck in the fence netting while playing with either Casey Booth or Leanne Hughes, either way they were useless in helping me because they were laughing too much. I felt like Laura Palmer wrapped in plastic....

8. Your family has also had an involvement in tennis at Mt Prospect, what are some of your favourite family memories with tennis?

The good old days when the parents would celebrate their wins or losses till late on a Saturday night while us children ran around the grass courts playing French cricket or jumping through the sprinklers. We most likely had fish & chips for tea as well. Mum did the canteen for years back in the 80's and I remember going in to stock up the fridges and freezers on a Friday night. The canteen back then was where the Bar is now.

9. How did you find the social aspect of the Association over the years?

Tennis now is not as social as it used to be but that is just the way things are now. Finishing earlier and probably the fact that not all family members participate means people don't stick around as long. In saying that I have participated in some very social occasions after Grand Finals and have learnt that singing Karaoke via the P.A. system may be heard from the main street of Creswick (Didn't know this until the Police came and told us). Eating or disposing of Scones from the freezer is not a good idea if Mid-Week are yet to play their Grand Final..

10. What do you think draws people to playing tennis at the Association?

The draw to Mt Prospect would have to be the grass courts. I also believe it to be an Association that caters and encourages players of all abilities to participate.

11. You have previously been on the committee of the Association. What advice do you have for anyone wanting to get involved with the Association in a voluntary capacity?

Volunteering can be a very rewarding experience. If you have any ideas or thoughts on how the Association can be made bigger or better than give it a go. In every club I have been involved with, new ideas and enthusiasm re invigorate committees and as a result big things happen. Seeing things through fresh eyes is huge.

12. Do you have any other stories or anything else you want to mention?

My family has had a long history with the Association for many years, my mother Joan Lafranchi is turning 83 this year and there are photos in the clubrooms of my mother winning under 19's country week. The only sister that does not appear in any Country Week photos is Michelle but does have her name on the board as winning the Singles Championship.

Ballarat Country Tennis Association
Junior Country Week
1992



U 19 B Premiers

Tim Prendergast, Damian Graf, Ashley Labbett, Anthony Pearce,
Sarah Chibnall, Caroline Chibnall, Jodie McKay, Donna Lafranchi.