

## **PRESIDENTS REPORT 2019/20**

At last year's AGM I indicated that *"we will very soon have an almost brand new facility to host tennis for years to come"*. Unfortunately we have hit a series of hurdles beyond our control and we have not been able to deliver on this promise, yet. However we would like to assure all members that we are doing all within our power to deliver this project. We continue to work diligently with all stakeholders to try to resolve the issues that have beset the court surface component of the project.

In the meantime I would like to thank every member of our 3 committees for the fantastic job they have done in managing the issues that the extended construction time has caused and managing the expectations of our increasing frustrated user groups and still delivering great tennis programs. To our members we say "Thank you" for your patience and for making the best of this situation. *It won't happen overnight but it will happen.*

Some of the highlights for the last year have been:

### **Club Coach**

We were delighted to appoint Anthony Zafiris as our new Club Coach in June 2019. Anthony brings a wealth of experience and sound technique to our Club and fills a major void that had developed in our coaching program. His enthusiasm and positive outlook have been an absolute breath of fresh air and all coaching participants have thrived under his supervision. Our ANZ Hot Shots program has thrived under Anthony as well and we are looking forward to a significant number of his Hot Shot students moving into Section 7 in 2021. We are delighted to have Anthony driving our coaching program and eagerly look forward to resumption of coaching post-COVID.

### **Participation**

- During the 2019/20 year we fielded a total of 65 separate teams in competitions in the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association, Sale & District Mid-Week Ladies Tennis Association and Club based competitions. This covered junior and senior summer pennant, night tennis on Tuesday and Thursday nights, mid-week ladies and winter junior pennant.
- We fielded 13 junior teams in 2019/20 in the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association. Of those 13 junior teams 6 teams made the finals. Of these Sections 1, 3 and 4 made their respective grand finals and Sections 1 and 3 were successful in winning the grand final with Section 4 only losing after 3 super tie-breakers.
- Of our 6 senior teams in WGTA 4 made the finals and 2 won through to the Grand Final. Section 2 lost against the top team Maffra in a hard fought match. In Section 3 Sale Orange finished 2<sup>nd</sup> then won both their matches to take out the pennant and complete a remarkable final series, defeating top team Longford in the final.
- This last season we fielded only 2 Sale & District Midweek Ladies teams. The aging demographic of our population and the financial pressure for women to participate in the workforce has meant that the competition throughout the district has shrunk to its lowest level in two decades. We have looked at various ways to try to counter this but it is a nation-wide trend that is hard for us to combat at our local level.
- We conducted our 67th consecutive Sale Tennis Club Championships. In a heartening trend entry numbers were again solid with good fields in most junior events with a sharp increase in the open events. We had near record numbers for the two Open Singles events with talented

junior Jess Board taking out the Open Women's and new Club Coach, Anthony Zafiris, taking out the Open Men's, ending a 12 year streak by Abe Schuback.

- We were unable to host our Junior Points Tournament over the Queen's Birthday weekend or our Spring Junior Tournament due to the ongoing court upgrades leaving not enough courts to host major events.
- Worked with Tennis Victoria and 2 local primary schools as part of the National Schools Partnership. These schools all delivered the ANZ Hot Shots program as part of their curriculum as well as receiving over \$1,200 of free tennis gear and a comprehensive training program.
- Delivered for the 13th year the Tennis Australia ANZ Hot Shots program. This program has gone from strength to strength with the numbers increasing from below 10 per week to now nearly 20 children participating in beginner tennis activities each week. We also had 10 children attend the Australia Open 2020 and participate in the "Kids on Court" program where the children play on the AO courts before the first matches of the day and get to toss the coin at the start of play, a once in a lifetime experience.
- STC juniors Baxter Pearce and Aden Best qualified as a ballkids at 2020 Australian Open, wonderful leadership roles for our emerging juniors.
- Revived, after an absence of over 15 years, the Dahlsens Challenge, an inter-town challenge for juniors and seniors is played between Sale and Bairnsdale Tennis Clubs. Events such as the Dahlsens Challenge are essential for the development of junior players in regional areas as it provides a rare opportunity for them to be part of a larger team representing their Club and to compete with and test themselves against their peers from other areas. We have now had 6 rounds of the Dahlsens Challenge with the current tally at 3 all.
- Our 14<sup>th</sup> Life Members Day attracted nearly 80 participants who enjoyed a great day of tennis and tennis themed activities and introduced them to our Club and new facility.
- We have been awarded a 3 year contract to deliver a Tennis Seniors event from 2020 onward. A large number of seniors tournaments are now played throughout Australia each year. Seniors tennis competitions are divided into five-year age groups starting at 35 years and tournaments comprise a mixture of round-robin and knock-out type events. Our event will carry seniors "points" that will contribute to players' Australian seniors ranking.

## Community

- Continued our involvement in the GippSport Healthy Sporting Environments program which is a structured program that assists with inclusion for all abilities, alcohol management, healthy eating, injury protection, UV protection and reduction of tobacco use. This in addition to our Club continuing to be a Level 3 Good Sports club.
- Sale Tennis Club hosted a fourth ballkids trial in March. The trial was part of the selection process for the ball kids at the Australian Open 2021. The day attracted children from all over the Gippsland region and 3 children made it through to the AO.
- In 2019 we conducted a further Responsible Service of Alcohol Course which was provided free of charge to all participating Club members and their immediate family. This brings to over 120 the number of Club members who now hold a RSA certificate as a direct result of our program.

- We had an estimated 35,000 separate visits to our facility from players, spectators, parents, tournament participants, school groups, casual users, function attendants, coaching students and other users.
- After an absence of 4 years the committee of Sale Tennis Club undertook to revive the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association Championships. In a great show of support in November there were over 50 entries from the 6 clubs that make up the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association. With large fields in the 10, 12 and 14 & Under events the children were on court early. For the first time in some years all Honour Board events attracted viable fields.
- After a slow start the Sale Community Garden is now starting to take shape. Sale Tennis Club has provided the land area to allow the community garden to be developed. This supports our overall philosophy of sharing our facility with other community user groups.
- Sale Tennis Club was a support sponsor of Sale College in September for their *Inspire* event, a community function at the Wedge featuring Winter Olympic Gold Medallist, Steven Bradbury.
- Sale Tennis Club helped to host a Special Olympics Australia and Victoria Police Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) to present GREAT – an opportunity to share the Flame of Hope and promote the importance of inclusion and acceptance for people with an intellectual disability. Events were hosted across the Gippsland region and included a Torch Run through the main streets of local towns, with the Sale run followed by a fun “Come and Try” sports event with programs delivered by local coaches and Special Olympics Australia athletes. The event was planned to provide more opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to play sport and feel connected in our local community and was assisted by representatives from Victoria Police and Special Olympics Australia.

## Recognition

- Sale Tennis Club has maintained its Top 50 status for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row in the annual Tennis Victoria club rankings. Sale came in at 26<sup>th</sup> in the rankings which is based on registered participants and user groups. The ranking is a reflection of the many and diverse groups that access our facilities throughout each year. These users include schools, academies, pennant players, ANZ Hot Shots kids, Cardio Tennis, Fast 4, coaching students, tournament players, occasional users and a vast array of others who make use of our facilities on an ongoing or casual basis. We are justifiably proud of this recognition but know that we must constantly strive to meet the needs of our users.
- Sale Tennis Club was one of a limited number of country clubs in Victoria invited to participate in the Tennis Australia “Open Court” program. This structured community tennis program is designed to encourage “lapsed” tennis players of all ages to get back on court for an active hit of modified social tennis. The programs caters for beginners, former players and those in between.
- Club President, Robin Lowe, was reappointed as a member of the Tennis Victoria Country Advisory Group. This group advises the Tennis Victoria Board on issues impacting regional tennis clubs, competitions and players.
- Club President, Robin Lowe, has recently been appointed to a Tennis Victoria focus group working on strategies required to safely return to tennis as the DHHS Restricted Activities Directions are gradually eased. Few issues have so threatened our sport and our lifestyles and this strategy group is critical in guiding the restart of tennis.

## Facilities

- Our Clubhouse renovation is complete with the whole of the interior renovation having been completed by mid-year. Our Clubhouse is now a modern state-of-the-art facility that is the equal of any clubroom throughout country Victoria. It has already been utilised for several social events and has been wonderfully well received by both junior and senior players in this seasons Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association matches.
- The LED lighting upgrade has been installed on Courts 1 and 2 and the whole of the infrastructure for the new lights has been installed on Courts 3 to 14, ready for use as soon as the new surface has been laid.
- Our solar electricity and 3 Tesla battery pack has been installed and has been providing electricity savings since June. The solar array is working exactly as planned and we are looking forward to the peak generation and saving period over the summer months. Since its installation we have generated 10.8 Mwh of electricity and saved 4,230 kg of Co2 emissions.
- Despite the aforementioned stumbling blocks we are looking forward to completing the full project during 2020 and delivering on the promise to create one of country Victoria's premier tennis venues.

## COVID-19

The Coronavirus has had a major impact on our community and on every sport in the country. Sport is part of the social fabric of most Australians and its absence has been a major blow to our daily lives. COVID-19 represents the biggest threat our community and to our Club have faced in many generations. We have been forced to shut down all of our programs and night pennants and coaching has been suspended. We have resolute volunteers who continue to work tirelessly in the background in preparation for resumption of tennis at our Club and we have the commitment and resources needed to see tennis return as soon as the DHHS Restricted Activities Directions are eased sufficiently to allow competition play to resume. We know people are anxious to resume play and we will facilitate this as soon as it is safely possible.

## Vale Paul Egan

In June last year we lost one of our treasured committee members. Paul Egan passed away on June 12 after an all too short battle with cancer. Paul will be fondly remembered as a happy spirit, always smiling and laughing, always ready to help out, forever positive and always doing something constructive. Whether manning the BBQ, being the "property steward" on the road trips to Bairnsdale, helping with Tuesday night pennant organisation with Kaz Deschepper, or serving on our General Committee, Paul was always available to help out.

We are delighted that with the help of Kaz Egan and Paul's parents we now have a permanent junior club person award named in Paul's honour. Sen Goold was the very well deserved first winner this March.

## Volunteers

The significant challenge for most community based organisations is the decline in volunteerism. Without volunteers our Club cannot run and without a Club our facilities cease to be maintained, to the detriment of all current and future users. We are most fortunate that we currently have a very

strong and long serving group of volunteers but we cannot be complacent as we search for the next generation of Club administrators and try to share with them the great sense of achievement that community service and volunteerism provides.

Our three committees work tirelessly to deliver our programs. Kurt Best has excelled in his role as President of the Junior Committee and has been assisted by new coach Anthony Zafiris, who brings invaluable experience from other clubs and roles. This committee has done a wonderful job and we should all be proud of the way they have brought together our junior program. A special thanks goes to Carmel Elliott who organised the canteen each Saturday morning.

Our General Committee has been very well served by: Our "Special K's" Karen Pollett, our Treasurer, and Karen Deschepper, our Membership Coordinator; Sonya Stephenson who has kept our minutes; Murray Fitzclarence and Di Arnot who have ensured that our bar remains stocked amongst many other tasks. Thank you also goes to all of our other General Committee members for their ongoing contribution, commitment and guidance. Jason Page has now stepped down from General Committee due to a work transfer. Jason brought an attention to detail to our administration helped with our Member Protection Policy. We are fortunate to have Andy Pate join our committee and he has taken on our Member Protection Officer role as well as bringing expertise in IT and social media. A very welcome new skill and he has had an immediate positive impact.

As with every year, I encourage everybody who enjoys the many benefits of our Club to find a way to make a contribution at some level. I also wish to acknowledge all of those people who have made a contribution, big or small, or have helped out in a myriad of ways. Without this support the Club would no longer exist.

Thank you.

Robin Lowe  
President  
Sale Tennis Club