

PRESIDENTS REPORT 2020/21

At the last 2 AGM's I indicated that *"We will very soon have an almost brand new facility to host tennis for years to come"*. While the "soon" proved to be overly optimistic we have entered the "home straight" of the redevelopment process. The full funding is now in place and the contractors have been onsite for the past few weeks and will remain there now until the job is finished. We are aiming to showcase our new courts to the tennis world at the Bradtke Luczak Cup at the end of July.

I would like to thank every member of our 3 committees for the unbelievable 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 keeping the faith.

Some of the highlights for the last year have been:

Participation

- During the 2020/21 year we fielded a total of 66 separate teams in competitions in the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association Junior and Senior pennant, 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 and mid-week ladies and was a significant achievement given the COVID restrictions prevailing for much of the year.
- We fielded 14 junior teams in 2020/21 in the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association. In the March 2021 WGTA Finals 12 teams made it to finals and we ultimately took home flags in Sections 1 and 7 and were runners up in Section 2 and 4, a fantastic representation.
- We were delighted to have 8 senior teams in WGTA pennant, 2 more than last year. 2 Sale teams made the finals and both won through to the Grand Final. While both teams were runners up we have built a solid foundation for next season.
- Mid-week ladies continue to hold their own and we continue to strive to improve numbers where we can. Michelle Eustace has taken a welcome leadership role and is well supported by her teammates.
- We conducted our 68th 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 the best numbers in a decade in the two Open Singles events with talented junior Jess Board taking out the Open Women's and Club Coach, Anthony Zafiris, taking out the Open Men's. In the 18 & Under events it was Jess Board in the girls and Hunter Pearce defended his title in the boys.
- We were unable to host our Junior Points Tournament over the Queen's Birthday weekend or our Spring Junior Tournament due to a lack of courts. We hope to resume junior tournaments in September 2021.
- Delivered for the 14th 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 25 children participating in beginner tennis activities each week. Further in 2021 we continued to deliver the Hot Shots program throughout the full year giving children the opportunity to accelerate their tennis development. This was a first in country Victoria.
- STC juniors Baxter Pearce and Aden Best both qualified again as ballkids at the 2021 Australian Open. This is a fantastic achievement for the two boys and gave them the opportunity to be in the thick of the AO action.

- Continued, after an absence of over 15 years, the Dahlsens Challenge, an inter-town challenge for juniors and seniors 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 9 rounds of the Dahlsens Challenge with Sale just 1 ahead in the tally after our latest victory.
- Conducted 2 Universal Tennis Ranking (UTR) tournaments, one in September and another in December that both attracted large fields. The UTR format is possibly the tournament of the future, providing a fun format which attracted players of all ages and abilities. Players play for UTR ranking points that allow them to benchmark themselves with players from around the world.
- Held another successful Life Members Day that attracted nearly 80 participants who enjoyed a great day of tennis and honoured our treasured Life Members.
- We have been awarded a 3 year agreement to deliver a Tennis Seniors tournament. A large number of senior's tournaments are now played throughout Australia each year. Seniors tennis competitions are divided into five-year age groups starting at 30 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.
- Tennis joined every other sport in Victoria in being shut down during the COVID-19 restrictions. However the unique nature of tennis meant that we were soon able to offer singles tennis matches to our members and the tennis community as a way for people to get valuable exercise and be able to socialise. This then grew to up to 10 people and then up to 20 at a time when other sports were still not able to operate. Our post COVID-19 "bounce back" has been a credit to the hard work of our 3 committees as we have stayed at the forefront of local sport and continued to offer participation opportunities within the confines of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Community

- Sale Tennis Club President, Robin Lowe, was a panellist for Gippsland Smart Futures Series: Community Energy for Sporting Clubs. An increasing number of sporting facilities are considering their environmental footprint and turning to a variety of renewable energy options that also reduce their electricity bills.

Initially scheduled to be a live seminar before the impact of COVID, the Gippsland Smart Futures Series became a webinar and was hosted by our own Jo Rule, Sustainability Officer for the Wellington Shire. It looked at 3 different projects in 3 very different local sporting venues, their solutions and the community benefits that have resulted from embracing this technology.

The webinar went live throughout Australia on July 1, 2020 and has also been posted online as an enduring community resource.

Robin presented on the solar power and battery storage initiative installed at Sale Tennis Club last year with details on how we planned and implemented the system and the outcomes. Our solar initiative has been an outstanding success with our electricity costs reduced to nearly zero over the summer months. Since it was installed our solar and battery system has produced nearly 30 MWh of electricity, which at our peak price of .4631 cents per kWh

represents a saving of nearly \$13,500 and in the process we saved nearly 11,500 kg of greenhouse gasses.

- Sale Tennis Club has provided the Sale Croquet Club with access to our defibrillator. Our defib machine is kept in our clubhouse in case of medical emergency and providing the Croquet Club with access means that their members and guests have access to the best available medical technology to assist in an emergency. Cooperation between tenants at Stephenson Park is a significant priority for our Club.
- Sale Tennis Club took a leading role in the Wellington Shire Community Managed Facilities Strategy development. The purpose of the Community Managed Facilities Strategy 2020-2025 was to guide Council in supporting volunteers, and the facilities they operate, to meet the needs of our community. The Strategy will allow Council to provide this support in a more transparent and equitable way across the whole of the Shire.
- 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.
- In 2020/21 we sponsored a further 10 members through a Responsible Service of Alcohol Course which was provided free of charge to 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 70 entries from the 7 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 measured start the Sale Community Garden is now fully operational. 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.
- Our Club has been an active partner in the Stephenson Park Master Plan currently being developed by Wellington Shire. We are enthusiastic about what our sporting precinct might become if the Master Plan can be fully developed and the plans turned into reality.

Recognition

- 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 re-engage with the sport and be active in a non-competitive, social environment. Open Court was a fun, social program that offered participants activities both on and off court.

- 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.
- Sale Tennis Club won the right to host a fifth ballkids trial in June as part of the selection process for the ball kids at the Australian Open 2022. We are the only Club east of Melbourne to be awarded a ballkids trial and we welcome the ability to offer opportunities to Gippsland children and generate publicity for tennis in our area.

Facilities

- Our Clubhouse renovation has been completed and we now have a modern state-of-the-art facility that is the equal of any clubroom throughout country Victoria. The upgrade of the courts, entrance area, grounds and surrounds are still ongoing but in the meantime we have full use of the new clubhouse. It has already been utilised for several corporate and social events as well as regular use by Sale Floral Art Group and has been very 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 - 7 and the whole of the infrastructure for the new lights has now been installed on Courts 8 to 14, ready for use as soon as the new surface has been laid.
- The en-tout-cas surface has been re-laid on Courts 5 to 7 and they are in full use. Courts 3 and 4 are fully laid and will be usable in the next few weeks. Courts 8 to 14 will follow soon. We are looking forward to finally completing the full project during 2021 and delivering on the promise to create one of country Victoria's premier tennis venues.
- During 2020 we were successful in applying for an Energy Efficient Communities Program grant, a Commonwealth Government initiative designed to help community organisations save energy and lower bills through:
 - equipment upgrades that reduce energy consumption,
 - investment in energy and emissions monitoring and management systems to better manage energy use,
 - completion of energy systems assessments according to the Australian Standard or feasibility studies to investigate energy efficiency opportunities,
 - energy generation and storage projects (for example, solar photovoltaic (PV) generator systems and batteries).

Our grant was used to upgrade all of our old incandescent and fluorescent globes throughout the older part of the Clubhouse with energy efficient LED as well as installing LED security lighting, replacing the old inefficient metal halide fittings. Our objective is to become energy neutral at our facility, notwithstanding the extensive night pennant and evening coaching programs that we offer.

Club Coach - Anthony Zafiris

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 continued to thrive under his supervision. Our Hot Shots program has flourished under Anthony as well and we are looking forward to a significant number of his Hot Shot students moving into our lower junior sections in 2021/22.

Vale Don Schuback

Life Member, Don Schuback, passed away on November 19, aged 95. Don was President of the Sale Tennis Club for 8 of our early years, with the last time being in 1977. Don was awarded life membership in 1965, meaning he was an honorary member of our Club for over 55 years, almost a lifetime. A life member of Sale Tennis Club and the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association, Don was also a life member of 6 other clubs. Eight life memberships is a truly remarkable feat that pretty much says it all about Don. He truly was a legend.

Volunteers

The most significant challenge for most community based organisations is the decline in volunteerism. Without volunteers our Club cannot run and without a Club our tennis programs cease and our facilities stop being 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 continues to excel in his role as President of the Junior Committee and has been very well supported by Club 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 Masami Gould who organised the canteen each Saturday morning.

Our General Committee has continued to be 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, Andy Pate our IT guru and Tim Dunnett who has the often difficult Club Captain's job. Thank you also goes to all of our other General Committee members for their ongoing contribution, commitment and guidance.

As with every year of my involvement with our Club, 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 these contributions our Club would no longer exist.

Our Club looks forward to the future with optimism.

Robin Lowe
President
Sale Tennis Club