

RLTA President's Annual Report 2002

Thank you's

Firstly, on behalf of the RLTA, I would like to express my sincere thanks to our immediate past president, Brian Chenoweth, for his services to this organisation over the five years he presided. Having taken over the reins from Brian 12 months ago when he had the opportunity for an extended tour of our great country, I now appreciate more than ever before all of the work that goes on behind the scenes here at the Cleveland centre and Brian's role therein. At its first monthly meeting in 2002, the RLTA Management Committee decided unanimously to award Life Membership to Brian in recognition of his years of service to the club. I should add that, since he has returned from his touring, Brian has continued to be of great service and support to our club.

Secondly, I would like to thank our resident coach/manager Jeff Schneider, for all of his efforts in keeping the club functioning, and in helping to ensure that every member has the opportunity to play in tennis fixture competitions that they will enjoy. Jeff has been with the RLTA for eight years now, and has always recognised that the future of any club like ours depends on fostering our juniors and in providing an avenue for them to progress through the ranks to feed our fixture competitions. His coaching prowess is beyond question but in recent years, he has had to deal with his own motivation for the task and just which direction his career was to head. However, I am pleased to report that despite a few ups and downs during the year, including a decline in junior coaching numbers, Jeff's renewed enthusiasm for the task was evident for all to see. His vibrant extroverted personality has been rediscovered, his efforts in progressing the new clubhouse project have been commendable, and he has returned to the court to personally conduct much of the junior coaching. Naturally, this has not gone unnoticed by the RLTA Management Committee and we have secured Jeff's services for a further three years.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the RLTA Management Committee for their support during the year and in particular, I would like to thank the Honorary Secretary Betty McCoy and the Honorary Treasurer Bruce Young who shoulder most of the more mundane but essential tasks that keep the RLTA functioning. Betty's work in organising the junior competitions should also be formally recognised.

Tennis activities in 2002

Our fixture competitions continue to be well supported overall, but there are changes happening which are not just specific to the RLTA. Our mid-week night competitions appear to be going from strength to strength, particularly the Thursday night fixtures that Jeff has helped to develop. But on the downside, we have struggled with numbers in our Saturday afternoon competitions, both in our pennant and A grades and to some extent, the veteran's fixtures. The theories put forward for this widespread decline in weekend fixture competitions (e.g. Beenleigh club no longer has Saturday afternoon fixtures) have been many and varied, but we have not simply sat back and watched it happen. This past year has seen some well-intentioned changes to the Saturday afternoon competition, which have not been an overwhelming success. However, after consultation with the players, a more streamlined competition is being designed for next year, which will possibly include teams from Wynnum Tennis Club.

Several interclub events were conducted this past year. Our regular inter-club competition (Tom Ferguson Shield) with Gold Coast, Beenleigh and Beaudesert was held at the Beenleigh centre in June and while we may not have won the day, it continues to be a great day for meeting like-minded individuals from the other tennis centres as well as a bonding activity for our own club. We also enjoyed inter-club matches with our northern neighbour, Wynnum Tennis Club, through a Junior Challenge match in July and a Senior Challenge in early December. Both were considered to be very worthwhile by those who participated and more are planned for 2003.

Club re-development

Our club has a history of over 70 or so years and it has been suggested on more than one occasion over recent years that many of our facilities have a “tired” look and feel. Our clubhouse was built more than 30 years ago in a different era with a much smaller membership. Our courts were converted from decomposed granite and bitumen over 20 years ago to synthetic grass, but while this was a very popular improvement, this surface has a life expectancy of just 8 to 10 years and needs regular maintenance. Our vintage chain-wire fences may have withstood the test of time and several cyclones, but much of it is rusty and in urgent need of a major facelift.

This is not to suggest that the centre has not been maintained, but at some stage, what is needed is a major refurbishment rather than cosmetic maintenance. This has long been identified at RLTA and previous administrations have been saving and planning for a major upgrade since the existing clubhouse was built 30 years ago. While we have had some refurbishment of the clubhouse and one new court added a decade or so ago, we are now in a financial position to move forward with a major upgrade and redevelopment.

Much research and planning have gone into the design of the new complex and for this, I wish to thank and congratulate our fellow member and architect Shane Keefe for his efforts as well as those of the current and previous building committees. The re-development will be in three stages, the timing of which will depend on cost and available finances. The overall plan is build a new clubhouse in the centre of the complex, purpose-built for our climate and the present and future needs of the RLTA.

The first stage of the new centre re-development involves the relocation and rebuilding of two courts (6&7) to make room for the new clubhouse. As part of the stage, an adjacent court (5) is being resurfaced and modern new environmentally friendly lighting will be installed on the three courts. Work on this stage began at the end of tennis fixtures in December and is expected to be ready for the start of the new tennis season in early February. We have been fortunate in obtaining of a contribution of \$27,500 from the State Government’s Community Benefit Fund towards the cost of re-surfacing.

The second and subsequent stages will involve the construction of the new clubhouse (designs displayed on club noticeboard) and the upgrade of lighting, playgrounds, fences, landscaping and other club facilities as finances permit. We are currently in the process of seeking further financial support (loans, grants, etc) for our endeavours from Redland Shire Council, Tennis Australia and State Government. While we are hopeful of commencing Stage 2 sometime in 2003, we are in the fortunate position of not having to demolish/recycle the existing clubhouse until after the construction of the new one.

Highlights of 2002

There were many highlights of my year as President of this club but the two that gave me greatest pleasure and confidence for the future was the support we received for our fund-raising stall at the Redlands Strawberry Festival and the “working bee” involved in dismantling and preparing the three courts for the first stage of redevelopment. To all those involved, I thank you personally as well as on behalf of the RLTA. It is just that kind of support that makes the RLTA such a great club, not just an association; it is also what makes my job so much easier and enjoyable.

Ian Somers

President RLTA.

