



Radley College Tennis Court

November 2019

Barely have you finished reading the most recent, and longest-ever, newsletter (not so much 'Half a Yard' and more like 'A Yard and a Half...') but another one pops into your in-box. It is all part of my new season resolution to keep the Newsletters shorter and more frequent.

Doing your bit for the game -

The Tennis & Rackets Association, our national governing body, has released a short promotional video to encourage more new players to try tennis, which can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.tennisandrackets.com/news/t-ra-promotional-video>.

The T&RA is vital to the health and future of the game and takes the lead in many aspects of real tennis: from supporting renovation and new build projects; co-ordinating a national programme of fixtures and tournaments; fostering junior development programmes; the accreditation and training of professionals; and maintaining the handicapping system, Real Tennis Online (RTO).

RTO enables the handicap system and the online booking system used by many clubs, including Radley and, shortly, Bordeaux.

Several clubs have incorporated membership of the T&RA into their annual subs and we are thinking about following suit. If players are not T&RA members, it is difficult for the online booking system to operate smoothly. To use the handicapping system, a player must be a member of the T&RA.

If you are not already a member, please join up and doing your bit to support our national association, which is vital for the future of the game. The T&RA needs YOU!

'Half a Yard' - The Club Newsletter

Erratum -

Several notable results were omitted from the most recent club Newsletter. With the Editor's apologies, the oversights are rectified below.

At the British Junior Open Championships, held at Queen's Club in August, the Nat Duncan Trophy and Racket were presented to Henry Henman for outstanding sportsmanship during the tournament.



Henry Henman, third from the left, with his prizes.

Benedict Yorston, OR and Radley member, is now an Oxford student, after taking a Gap Year during which he spent time working at the tennis club in Washington. The amount of time he has been on court over the past year paid off and he had some excellent results.

Fresh from a great deal of court time in America, he took part in the French Junior Championships back in April and won the senior event, the U19s.

Benedict's next major tournament was most recently in September at the Hyde, Bridport, where the National Category B Handicap Tournament was held for those with handicaps in the range of 10-19. Success breeds success...

Benedict beat all comers, including local professional, Jez Brodie, to secure a place in the Final against Nino Merola; making it was an all-Radley affair. Benedict had an impressive win, 6-3, 6-1 and did not concede more than three games in any set throughout the tournament. This run of form took his handicap to its lowest-ever, 16.9.

Benedict reports that his room at Merton College is precisely 17 metres from the real tennis court, which is about as good as it can get. The Blues team beckons, and he can look forward, all being well, to his first Varsity Match in February 2020.

Club News

What the Pros have been doing:

CJR World Record –

CJR recently celebrated the 48th anniversary of the start of his career in Real Tennis, thus extending his lead as the world's longest-serving full-time Pro.

It all started like this...

At coffee time on 14 September 1971, Chris was interviewed by Peter Dawes, the Head Pro at the Oxford Club, saw a real tennis court for the first time and was offered the job of Assistant Professional.

He started work after lunch the same day and he never struck a ball as an amateur.

Nino – Competition success

Nino had a busy and successful October, playing in the various events that comprise the IRTPA (International Real Tennis Professionals Association) Championships at Wellington College.

Making his way into the semi-final of the Ged Eden IRTPA Satellite event qualified Nino for the main

tournament, the Peter Luck-Hille IRTPA Championships. Great news!

He did not, however, have the easiest of draws. By no means. Not at all. In his first round he came up against none other than the current World Champion, the extraordinary Rob Fahey.

Rob has been playing tennis for approximately 30 years longer than Nino. Rob won 6/0, 6/2, 6/3, but Nino played well, learned a great deal and it was fantastic experience for an ambitious and improving player.

Nino's Satellite event semi-final was against John Woods-Casey (Melbourne) and Nino just lost the very tight first set 5-6, having had several set points against the Australian, who had a handicap 3.5 points better than Nino. Thereafter, things did not go so well and Woods-Casey progressed to the final, which he won, beating local professional Adam Player.

The following day was the final of another event in the Championships, the Taylor Cup, which is for young professionals. Nino again found himself facing John Woods-Casey, but he had cleared his head overnight and worked out a different game plan. Having lost to John the previous day, Nino's winning score of 6-2, 6-5 is especially creditable.



Nino with the Taylor Cup

You can relive the action by using the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDANAZMX_SJxeArRHdnldA

In winning the Taylor Cup, Nino joins an impressive band of players, including three World Champions and more Challengers for that title, with their names on that trophy. Not only did CJR win it in 1793 (whoops, 1973!) but several of CJR's former Assistants, including Steve Virgona, Nick Wood, Adam Phillips, Camden Riviere, Paul Knox, John Lumley and Zak Eadle have their names on the trophy, since it was first awarded in 1963.

A few days later, Nino was back in competitive action, this time on the doubles court. He and club member Ashley Deakin joined forces in the Charles Acheson-Gray Cup, which was played at Queens. This is a pro-am doubles event and Nino and Ashley did very well to win their first five matches before losing the semi-final.

Club Tournaments

The Radley Singles and Doubles Championships will take place over the weekend of 14/15 December.

More details about this weekend will be circulated in due course, but we hope that many members will take the opportunity of watching some of the best players at the club fighting it out on level terms in highly competitive, all-marked play.

Intra-Club Competitions

Radley Handicap Championship -

The annual singles handicap event, in which almost all club members take part, is reaching an advanced stage. Both the Winner and Runner-up will be invited to take part in a tournament to be held at Bridport in January, in which they will meet their opposite numbers from each UK club and play for the Chetwood Cup and to be crowned as the Champion of Club Champions.

Night Pennant -

The Autumn Night Pennant, for players in the handicap range of 50-60, is rolling on. As ever, this team event will be played on Thursday nights until the end of the year. Chris will email everyone in due course about the Winter Night Pennant, which will kick-off in the New Year.

This format has proved enduring and popular. CJR started it at the Melbourne club in the 1970s and we will be introducing it at Bordeaux.

Inter-Club Matches

The Franklin Solicitors Thames Valley League –

The 2019/2020 season's FSTVL competition kicked off in September and will run through to the end of April next year.

We have played two matches so far, both away, at Wellington and Moreton Morrell.

Each set won is worth a point in the league table and points are more important than match wins, which is just as well. We need to raise our game to match or exceed our third-place finish last season.

We don't have a match in November and our next fixture will be on Sat 7 Dec, when we will play Oxford at home; always a spicy local derby! Maggie will be in touch about that match with players in the relevant handicap bands.

The Brodie Cup –



The Brodie Cup is Radley's main event in the national inter-club tournament calendar and is a team competition for players in the handicap range of 30-50.

We will be playing Cambridge in the First Round at Radley on Sunday 17 November. Spectators will be most welcome to support our team of adult members and Radley College boys - and an extensive lunch will be on offer!

Five rubbers are played, comprising three singles and two doubles for the seven-person team, marked and played level, with an adjustment for home court advantage.

National Tournaments at Radley

We hope that two female players will be competing for the first time in the main draw of the British Open this year.

The British Open is being played at Queen's Club from 17-26 November. One woman is already in the main draw but the other must qualify.

Lea Van Der Zwalmen will feature in the British Open Qualifying day, which is being played at Radley on Thursday 14 November. She would be delighted if you would come and support her when she plays at 11.00 against Freddie Bristowe, the reigning Junior World Champion.

The world's best-ever female player, Claire Fahey, has qualified automatically for the main draw and she will be playing in the Singles and Doubles.

The Ladies Real Tennis Association U21 Singles Championship

This inclusive handicap tournament, which is open to girls of any standard, will be played at Radley over the weekend of 23/24 November.

There are a dozen players in the tournament draw, the handicaps range from 60s to 90s and the age range is from 9 years upwards.

Other National Tournaments

National Inter-Club Tournament

Paul Kettle, Nick Gordon and Tim Roberts represented Radley over the weekend of 2 and 3 November in this annual handicap tournament, which is jointly played at the Moreton Morrell and Leamington courts.

Each team comprised a singles player and a doubles pair, with prizes being awarded to the winners of each category and to the most successful overall team, calculated after the organisers had wrapped wet towels round their heads and combined/weighted/adjusted the scores of the singles and doubles representatives.



Nick Gordon and Tim Roberts were delighted to be presented with the National Inter-Club Handicap Doubles Trophy from Sir Andrew Hamilton in the clubroom at Moreton Morrell.

In the singles, Paul was 'really up against it', reported Nick and Tim, being at least ten points better than any of the others in his group - and you can only win so many games from owe 15- 40 down. The Fates were not kind to Paul.

It was left to Nick and Tim to fly the Radley flag on the second day, and they did so very well indeed! Playing three matches on Saturday and a further three on Sunday, they recorded four wins, a draw and only one loss, and emerged as the overall winners of the Doubles event.

Paul praised his fellow team-members' solid play, good volleying and accurate reading of the courts.

The start of the tournament was delayed so that everyone could watch the RWC Final. Bacon butties and a Full English Breakfast (highly praised by Paul) were available, with the Leamington chef doing sterling work to alleviate the English fans' disappointment.

The clubs were fine hosts, the atmosphere throughout was terrific and all three Radley player enjoyed themselves thoroughly, they report.

National Tournaments

The LRTA National Handicap Championships –

The 39th LRTA Handicap Championships were held at Prested on 9/10 November and split into two Divisions; I for players below H64 and II for those over H65. Congratulations to Ali Kirkwood who won the Division I Singles, beating Candida Nicholls 6/4 in a fiercely close match. Ali had success in the Division 2 Doubles, in which she was Runner-up with her partner and Prested member, Kim Walker.



Ali Kirkwood, holding her trophy, and Candida Nicholls, the Runner-up

The British Open Singles –

As mentioned above, the qualifying event for the main tournament will be held at Radley on 14 November. The British Open itself will be held at Queen's Club from 17-26 November.

There will be some excellent tennis throughout the weekend, so please drop in at any time, particularly when Nino is playing, as good home support for him would be much appreciated. Nino has qualified for the main draw and will be playing the Assistant Professional at Oxford, Craig Greenhalgh, at 10am on Sunday 17 November.

Juniors

Radley College remains the dominant force in inter-school real tennis nationally and is tipped to do well once again in the National Inter-School Singles Championship, which will be played on 1 December at Radley and Wellington, followed by the U18 Singles Handicap tournament on 14/15 December, which will be held at Wellington.

In the run-up to that event, we have three participants in the National Under 19 Doubles Championships at Queens on 17 November and we wish Ed Crowston, Henry Henman and Max Wetton good fortune in that tournament.

The Rest of the World

Hobart-

The President of the Hobart Club would be delighted to welcome as many of our members as possible in January 2020 for their Summer of Tennis. Time is running short but there is still time to enter. Teams of three or more players compete over a five-day period in a handicap doubles tournament, with a full week of social events planned to complement the tennis.

And lastly...

Radley has a new club website, courtesy of Paul Kettle's efforts. It is a work in progress, but we hope will be a relevant and attractive source of information to our current and prospective members. Use this link to see it for yourself: <https://rctc.club/>.

Please let Maggie know your views and suggestions and if you would like to get involved in producing this newsletter or maintaining the website.

We will see you on court very soon, we hope!