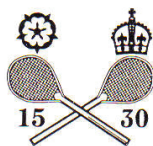


THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT

Hampton Court Palace



Photograph by Martin Bronstein

AU REVOIR

BEN MATTHEWS HEADS FOR BORDEAUX

See page 4

The Spring Newsletter 2010
Number ninety-one

chairman's chat

My three-year term of office as your honorary chairman comes to an end at the AGM in May. I would like to thank you all for the support you have given me. As I said when I took it on it would be an honour, and so it has been.

The board will propose at the AGM that Paddy Sweetnam succeeds me. We all believe he will make an excellent chairman. Meanwhile, for a few more months it's business as usual.

We are all very sorry that Ben Matthews left us at the end of February to take up a position at Bordeaux, where he will get more court time for practice than he was able to enjoy at RTC. He has been a delightful member of the professional team. In his three years at RTC he has improved his handicap from -12 to +5, thanks to his own dedication and Nick Wood's outstanding coaching skills. We shall follow Ben's progress with interest and keep our fingers crossed that he can achieve his ambition (more of which on page 4).

I am sorry to say that I have no news on the findings of the Hegarty review into the funding and expenditure of the Tennis and Rackets Association, but we continue with other clubs to urge the T&RA to consider carefully its expenditure in parallel with its funding.

On page 6 I have explained our offer of the free use of the club rooms on Saturday evenings for a trial period. We have now got a minimal waiting list for membership and I would urge members to use this opportunity to introduce new members to our game and the historic facilities we have available.

The AGM will be held on Sunday 9 May at 11am. I do hope you will be able to attend as I plan to provide a modest libation for those present.

Peter Ohlson



Kaut on camera: the chairman takes time off from setting hazard chases to indulge his other passion: steeplechases. Fortunately for those present, he did not lose his shirt

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Favourites **Camden Riviere** and **Steve Virgona** suffered no alarms in defeating Ruaraidh Gunn and Bryn Sayers respectively in February to set up an intriguing 13-set final eliminator at Tuxedo in New York state on 18, 20 and 21 March. The pair have had so many close encounters that few observers dare pick a winner. Both managed to lose their US Open semi-finals the following week.

The victor will face **Rob Fahey** for the title on 4, 6 and 8 May in Melbourne, again over 13 sets. For more details, click [HERE](#).

COMING UP

RTC

17 Mar: RTC 1 v MURTC 1, Nat Lge
4 Apr: Barker-Camm A Grade
9 May: AGM (11am)

ELSEWHERE

20 Mar: MCC 1 v RTC 1, Nat Lge
20-28 Mar: Amateur Singles, Queen's
23 Mar: T&RA AGM & dinner, Queen's
18-21 Mar: World Championship final eliminator, Tuxedo
12-19 Apr: World Masters, Queen's
13-18 Apr: U21/U24 Ch'shps, MURTC
20-25 Apr: British Ladies Open, Seacourt
4-8 May: World Ch'shp final, Melbourne

Best in show, Rich in intrigue

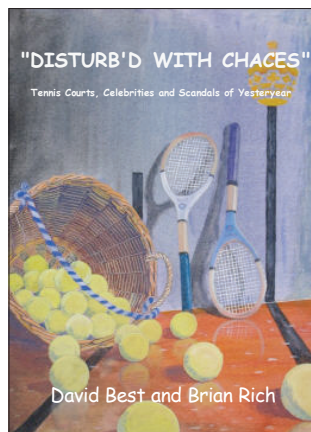
Most of us have a basic knowledge of the rules of popular sports, but the history and origin of games passes us by.

Thankfully, two players of real tennis have independently continued to research the history, the courts (many long gone), the characters and the matches of a bygone era – and they are our own RTC members. David Best and Brian Rich have brought this wealth of fascinating knowledge together in their new book, *Disturb'd with Chaces*.

In Brian's case, he is finally putting in print his extensive work rediscovering real tennis through articles written in *The Field* from its first publication in 1853; and for David Best it is a home for research he continues to this day,

following the 2002 publication of his highly acclaimed book, *The Royal Tennis Court: a History of Tennis at Hampton Court Palace*.

The new book brings to vivid life the peaks and the troughs of popularity of tennis over the centuries while unearthing more than 50 courts not previously known. It charts their various uses and abuses and brings further life to players and key figures and stories of those times.



This is not a dusty tome, but a really good read. It brings to our attention events from ages when the curtain of publicity was gradually opening and tennis was a sport not regularly reported upon.

You will miss out if you ignore this key milestone in the real tennis library. So enjoy, learn a little, discover just how much £1 was worth in the 16th century, astound your friends, and treat yourself

to this wonderfully produced book.

John Edwards

News from the pros

By Nick Wood

IRTPA National League – Sponsored by Shilton, Sharpe & Quarry

Wednesday 17 March 2010

Premier Division: Royal Tennis Court vs Middlesex University Real Tennis Club
Come along and watch world champion Rob Fahey in action. Tickets on sale now.

Professional team

So, young Ben is leaving us! As of the end of February, Ben has departed to sunnier climes in Bordeaux. We will miss his enthusiasm and dedication with which he approached his role here at RTC.

In two years I have seen Ben grow in stature (!), maturity and professionalism. His handicap improved from 3 to an amazing +5 and this season has some notable victories over yours truly and Ruairaidh Gunn. Ben is well on the way to becoming a top player. With the extra court time available in Bordeaux, he can continue his training, at the same time as taking on the running of the club.

In the meantime Stef, Les and I will be coping until we find a replacement. Job adverts have been posted and we have received a large number of applicants. We hope to be back to our full compliment of professionals as soon as practicable.

Tournaments

Events have been progressing well. In the Lathom Browne we are reaching the final matches of the grades, and the Barker-Camm Cup grades have been hotly contested. Fraser Shorey has been playing astonishingly well, making it through to two grade finals. He won the

D grade against Owen Saunders 6/2 6/5, and is yet to play the C grade final.

Varsity match

This year saw a historic Varsity match between the Oxford and Cambridge teams, with the closest men's match in decades seeing Oxford emerge as the eventual winners, 4–2.

The Cambridge girls triumphed again with another strong side dominated by the presence of one Karen Hird – but she was not the only Hird present, with Sarah and Robert playing their respective parts for Oxford and Cambridge. James Watson, Sam Halliday and Charlotte Barker also

played, making RTC's representation a healthy six of the 16 players involved.

It is refreshing to see RTC playing such an active role in the development of juniors, and it would be great to see more junior members coming through the ranks.

Shop

Would you like to purchase a Royal Tennis Court **extra-tec racket**? Reinforced frame, painted in blue with RTC decoration. And how about an RTC **cable knit (cricket) sweater**? Off white cable knit sweater with RTC coloured trim and emblem. Please let the pros know if you are interested as I will require a minimum number to proceed.

Wood's Words

The serve is more than just putting the ball into play. The player at the service end has the opportunity to serve in such a way as to prevent the opponent from attacking the first shot.

The service player can also use the service as an opportunity to persuade the opponent to return in a certain way. For example – serve a good railroad and your opponent is likely to return to your volley; serve a short sidewall and your opponent is likely to return cross court to the main wall side of the court. If you can dictate what

Head professional Nick Wood on the fine art of serving

sort of shot your opponent hits in return, then you are more than likely to take advantage of being at the service end.

Service selection and execution are the most important aspects of the serve. Serve badly and you're in all sorts of trouble!

Tips

- Try to make your opponent return to your strengths.
- Carefully select two to three serves for each game.
- Concentrate on trajectory and accuracy – not spin and pace.

Weatherill wins Seal Salver

Considering the length of time it took for the Seal Salver of 2008–09 to be completed, the smart money would have been on Pheidippides to nick it.

However, the fleet-footed Greek was nowhere to be seen on final day – an Achilles heel seemed the most likely explanation. A relief, surely, for defending champion Bernard Weatherill, for even he would have struggled to give up a handicap allowance of around 2,480 points in an event in which a player's handicap is determined by his or her age.

Awaiting Bernard in the final was Paddy Jenkins, claiming a handicap advantage of 8, which was marginally less than the real difference between the two. Despite Paddy's best efforts, Bernard was always in control of the

match, and he kept an admirable length with his shots to win three separate games from 0–40 down and retain his title with a stylish performance.

The final score of 9/4 did not do Paddy justice, but he will be back...



Youth over experience: Bernard Weatherill with Paddy Jenkins

CAROL SERVICE 2009

The Annual Carol Service took place on Tuesday 15 December in Chapel Royal. The lessons were read by Peter Ohlson, Lindsay Hatchett and the chaplain. As usual, the service was followed by eats and drinks in the club rooms.

Although the number attending was greatly down compared with other years, those who came enjoyed the evening as much as ever.

DAVID SEELIG

Notes from a Duffer INTERFACE

*I've used the shaft, the frame,
my knuckles
And many other things
But oh! You can't imagine how
my heart sings
When the ball hits the strings.*

Martin Bronstein

A new beginning for



He has worked under two of the greats at RTC, and now Ben Matthews has departed for Bordeaux and a fresh adventure.

Here he shows his gratitude for those who have helped him...

The year has started with a bang for me and I have been given a huge opportunity, one which I have decided to grasp with both hands. The opportunity is to travel down to Bordeaux and take up the position of head professional there, along with a close friend and training partner.

My ambition is to be the real tennis world champion, with the initial target being 2012, although I'll happily take the title at any stage of my career! The past 20 months with the new professional team have provided me with a great platform to achieve this, culminating in a fantastic end to 2009, beating two top-five players (yes, Nick Wood being one of them!) and making the first major tournament final of my career. Surely, then, it seems silly to leave this all behind and move on to unknown pastures?

Well, I am at a stage in my career where I know what I want to work on and what I believe will help me towards achieving my ultimate goal and what I need to do now is work on these aspects religiously. Moving to Bordeaux, where court time is plentiful, I can hide myself away for a year and work on the things I want to, coming back a much more complete package.

This does not, however, come without sacrifice, and for me that is leaving my

position as part of the team at RTC. It is with great regret that I leave the club that has propelled me from being an average Joe in real tennis to a top-eight player in the world. Giving me the opportunity to move up to London and have an experience at the biggest club in the world is something for which I will always be indebted to the club. From the moment I started working here in July 2006 (is it that long!) I was made to feel welcome by everybody, and it certainly made the process of moving away from home much easier.

My time with the Ronaldsons was certainly an experience! Moving into a family was quite a daunting task but it actually helped to settle in as, with the help of a surrogate mother (Les) and the wit and charm of Ben, with Chris's experience, you soon feel at home and are invited in with open arms. I am extremely grateful to them for making the first few months bearable enough for me to want to stay! Strangely enough, having effectively "swapped" jobs with Ben Ronaldson, I always see him when I go back home to Bridport and advise him where to eat, who to talk to etc.

My tennis instantly improved after taking the plunge and moving to RTC. My handicap went from 12 to 4 in the first six months and then dropped another 2 points in the next year.

It is in the past 20 months, however, that my game has gone from strength to strength. This is mainly down to three factors: Nick Wood, Stef King and the Young Professionals Fund. I cannot express how grateful I am to all these parties for taking the time and effort to invest in me financially, personally and with their time. In the past 18 months I have gone from a 2 handicap to a +5, made my first ever major tournament final and gathered enough world

ranking points to guarantee my seeding for tournaments in the future.

What many of you may not know is that Nick has been up with me at 6.45am four days a week, as a ball machine. He gets up, strolls on court and hits me whichever balls I want for an hour, and has never grumbled about being up early, nor failed to answer any of my questions. Twenty months' worth of coaching from the classiest player in the world has had a huge impact, and I cannot emphasise how much he has helped my game, not just on the court but off the court as well.

I remember when he said to me that I had to plan my training for the three months leading up to the US Open in 2008. "Plan?" I said. "What on earth are

"Twenty months' worth of coaching from the classiest player in the world has had a huge impact, and I cannot emphasise how much Nick has helped my game"

you talking about?" His reply was: "If you come down tomorrow at 7am without a plan, I won't come on court with you from now until the tournament starts."

I initially thought that was a bit harsh, but I went away and turned up with some scribbles the next morning. After practice we then went to the pro shop and worked on this plan for two hours (out of working hours, of course!) until I had every hour on court planned for the next three months. That day I learned so so much and it is this help that has had a huge influence on my results in the past few months.

Continued on page 5 >

Photographs by Martin Bronstein

Upwardly mobile

He has improved steadily since coming to RTC, but this past winter has seen the most significant advancements in the fortunes of Ben Matthews

Before this season Ben Matthews was just one of a number of players jostling for position behind an established group of five or six players at the top of the world order. He was taking care of business against 'lesser' players but could not defeat any of the elite.

That all changed in November – and his first high-profile victim was his own boss. A defeat of Nick Wood in the British Open at Queen's was followed the next

week by a stunning win over Ruairaid Gunn in the IRTPA Championships in Manchester and a first major final.

In recent weeks Ben has captured his first Open doubles title, pairing up with Steve Virgona to deny Camden Riviere and Tim Chisholm in the US Open. He lost out to Bryn Sayers in the singles quarter-finals but still gained enough ranking points to get an official ranking of eighth in the world.

rising star Ben

< Continued from page 4

Nick has also given me the chance to travel and practice on a weekly basis by giving me three days off per week! This has enabled me to pit my wits against others on a regular basis and experience different training partners and courts, which is so valuable.

So Nick, I thank you, obviously for the court time and coaching, but mainly for getting up early every week and for the experience you have given me off the court, in terms of planning and being game-savvy. This has changed my mindset and completely turned me around as a player.

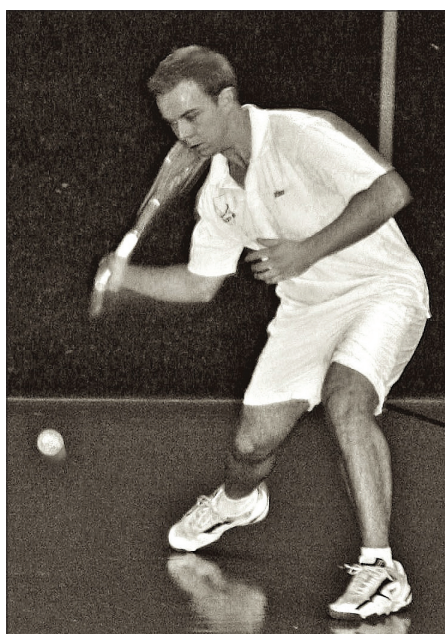
Many of you may know that Stef is quite into his fitness. Well when he walked into the pro shop, I thought the club had appointed a drill sergeant. Not long after we'd all started together, we went for a team run and I remember thinking that if that was a sign of things to come, I wouldn't last long in the job!

Stef has taught me a lot of self-discipline with regards to healthy living and it has helped my mindset in terms of my diet, keeping in shape and becoming much more driven towards achieving my goals. I remember Stef walking into the pro shop one morning and saying abruptly: "Whose doughnut is that in the kitchen?" (It wasn't mine, it really wasn't.) He then proceeded to say: "We're not having that rubbish in here," and threw it in the bin. Since then, no doughnuts have appeared anywhere near the pro shop and I've never looked back.

Stef has been out running round Bushy Park with me on countless occasions, and he's always done it at my pace and tried to up that pace bit by bit over the weeks. We managed to take five minutes off it by the end. We also spent most Wednesday mornings

before work in the gym together. If there is something Stef doesn't lack, it's motivation, and I have certainly felt that rub off on me – the benefits have been felt for a while now. On that cold, dark morning, instead of staying in bed, you'll find me on court practising, or out for a run or in the gym.

So Stef, I thank you for all the patience and time you've given me in the park, wasting your time running at my slow pace and helping me along. For coming to the gym with me and helping me with some obscure



workouts, and for all the motivation and discipline you have given me over the past 18 months – not to mention teaming up on Nick on a Wednesday afternoon.

Also, some of you may not have heard of the Young Professionals Development Fund. It is a fund set up to support the professionals at RTC and aids their development. For me, this has come mainly in the shape of airfares to tournaments, to help me

gather up the world ranking points that have got me to No 8 in the world.

Nick helped to restructure the Pro Fund about a year ago and that also helped me become more organised in the way of setting up plans for the year ahead and then approaching the fund with facts and figures that made it much easier for them to invest in me. All the investment could not have been done without you, the members and your contributions to the Pro Fund.

For those of you who have known me for the last 3½ years, the benefits are obvious. A handicap leap from -12 to +5 doesn't happen without financial support and the members have given me this by contributing to the fund. Without the fund, trips to Australia would not have happened; going to America twice a year would not have happened; access to gyms with the required equipment would not have been possible. I am so so grateful to you all for supporting this fund, and the help it has given me is there for all to see.

I hope the Pro Fund can continue to support the pros at RTC and I'm sure it will be easier without me gobbling up all the funds! Anybody interested in supporting this fantastic setup should speak to Nick when they are next in, or email the club.

I want to conclude by reiterating how much I have enjoyed working at this club and the people that I have had the pleasure of working with. I am looking forward to using the help I have had and the knowledge I have gained to have a real stab at achieving my goals, and I thank you all for being so supportive during my time here.

Also, if anybody wants a nice relaxing, wine-fuelled tennis weekend, Bordeaux is the perfect club, with its fantastic pros (pardon the plug!).

PRO TOURNAMENTS

In the first major of 2010, an injured Rob Fahey limped to the Australian Open final in Hobart but was unable to compete with a healthy Ruairaidh Gunn in the final.

Then came the US Open in New York. Oddly, Camden Riviere and Steve Virgona both lost their semi-finals. In

the final, the talented James Stout defeated Bryn Sayers.

IRTPA Championships

Winner: Rob Fahey.

Finalist: Ben Matthews.

IRTPA Satellite T'ment

Winner: Rod McNaughtan.

Finalist: Craig Greenhalgh.

British Open

Singles – Winner: Rob

Fahey. **Finalist:** Steve

Virgona. Doubles –

Winners: Nick Wood & Steve

Virgona. **Finalists:** Rob

Fahey & Ruairaidh Gunn.

Australian Open

Singles – Winner: Ruairaidh

Gunn. **Finalist:** Rob Fahey.

Doubles – Winners: Rob

Fahey & Ruairaidh Gunn.

Finalists: Chris Chapman &

Kieron Booth.

Seacourt Silver Racquet (handicap)

Winner: Conor Medlow.

Finalist: Matt Ronaldson.

US Open

Singles – Winner: James

Stout. **Finalist:** Bryn Sayers.

Doubles – Winners: Steve

Virgona & Ben Matthews.

Finalists: Tim Chisholm &

Camden Riviere.

Marauders on tour: USA

Richard East, the Bill Bryson of RTC, describes his Marauders team's exhausting three-leg tour of the eastern seaboard

On 10 November, I and my team winged our way across the Atlantic, fearlessly into the teeth of an approaching hurricane, to compete in the Calhoun Witham trophy in Aiken, and then to carry the Marauders flag to Washington and Philadelphia.

In Aiken, the first words spoken to me in the club were, without any prior form of greeting, "Oh my God, he's back. Homeland Security has failed again." So I knew I was among family.

After the obligatory induction of an all-night training session at the Hotel Aiken with my good friend Kishan Shah (the owner), first up on Wednesday was the fragrant Victoria Carew Hunt, partnered with the singing cowboy Jesse Young. But the yodelling did not prevail, and she went down to a corporate bandit from Washington (whom I have since invited on to our Boomerang team for 2011); but little bro Johnny East took on the challenge of playing with that madman Duncan Rutherford and nobly mastered his errant tendencies to end the day one up.

Sadly the next day was a disaster for your court representatives, after another evening's heavy training, as first Ian Mathers, who trains very seriously, then Victoria, then yours truly (and playing with the holder, John Murphy of Newport, at that) and then Robin Mulcahy ("the handicaps were rigged!") all went down in swift succession, effectively ensuring that only John East could progress to the knockout stages from the round robin. I think it was some time on this day

that Robin engaged in conversation with his partner Warren Dempsey and his wife Karen (who used to be married to Peter O'Toole, as she kept telling us), and offered her the chance to travel on with him to Honolulu for a few days, which offer she graciously accepted. We await the full unexpurgated story of what happened next from Robin when he returns from the rest home.

John, meanwhile, was thwarted in the semi-final when his partner crippled himself to ensure he didn't have to play any more when he could be off fixing people's computers (apparently much more fun).

Friday brought a respite, when your goodself, Robin Mulcahy, and John East all progressed. Another night's training, and all went down blazing with all hands on deck on Saturday, before yet another magnificent party in the balmy evening on the lawn at the club – and then a polo match specially put on for us visitors.

And so yours truly girded himself for the effort of getting his unruly crew to Washington for the next leg.

After a few mishaps, we finally all assembled in the capital. Ian soon became Temple Grassi's (our host) best friend, and between them for the next 36 hours they drowned out all other conversation anybody else might have attempted. Temple ruthlessly stitched us up 4-3 by using a combination of serious upwardly mobile strivers and rapid improvers at our game to ensure that we never had a chance. It was nice to see Ivan Ronaldson (now married)

again, plus Phil Shannon, who I imagine does most of the work.

By this time, the ever emollient James Wilson had joined us fresh from his holiday in St Lucia, and put himself about a bit in his oleaginous way, which is not a bad description for his tennis earlier in the day. But our stalwarts now faded away, leaving James and myself to take the train to Philadelphia for the Jimmy Dunn tournament and four nights in the Etruscan palace that is the Racket Club of Philadelphia.

And what a good time we had of it. Tennis every day, a huge building with infinite resources at our disposal, a swimming pool on the third floor, my account for James to plunder, great old friends to practise with in the rooftop court, and the best mid-sized east-coast city the Americans have for us to disport ourselves in.

You may have noticed not much being said about our tennis while we were there. Least said, soonest mended; James blew us out of our first match to ensure that we lost by a point, and then the next match we were set up against the same pair of overachievers we had had such an unpleasant time with in Washington. Next time, I will be more careful whom I play against.

On Sunday we pulled our shattered selves together and gradually went home. I await my bar bill from the racket club with some foreboding, but otherwise I can assure all my readers that, God willing, somehow or other, we will be going again.

CLUB NEWS ● CLUB NEWS ● CLUB NEWS

Saturday nights

Chairman Peter Ohlson writes:

I would like to set out the board's thinking behind the offer to members to use the club rooms without charge on Saturday evenings. In essence we are trying to achieve a combination of three objectives:

- Firstly, and most importantly, to promote real tennis and particularly the RTC to prospective players who have either never played or have lapsed. Currently the waiting list for new members to join is a matter of weeks.

- Secondly, to see the court fully used on a Saturday night, when there are usually very few bookings.

- Thirdly, to encourage members to bring potential players along for a convivial evening in rather special surroundings.

My wife and I hosted just such an evening recently and, ably assisted by Stefan, got five people on court for more than two hours, and I very much hope this will result either in some new members or at least some evangelists for the game. It was a completely new experience for all the newcomers and

they were all seriously intrigued by the subtleties and challenges of our game.

I hope this helps to clarify the spirit and the intentions of the offer. We don't wish to be prescriptive about the number of courts booked, but three would seem to be a fair outlay. If we stick to the spirit of the concept there would no more than a dozen attending, so as to give most a chance for some live experience on court. There will be no visitors' fees or spare racquet charge on these evenings.

We'll try it for a period and assess the results.

The Lord's flayers

The ubiquitous Richard East modestly takes us through a remarkable winning run on his recent travels

Over this three-day weekend handicap doubles tournament at Lord's, Tony Crook and Richard East, both sometime stalwarts of RTC (Tony now plays mostly at Holyport), as well as incidental members of the MCC (and, not coincidentally, methinks, both alumni of St Paul's School and of Oxford University), swept past the great and good of cricket's (and, as Lord's would have it, real tennis's) premier ground to lift the Atkinson/Sharp trophy on Sunday 7 February.

The combination of Crook's magnificent crosscourt returns of service over, into or round the net, and a mean drag service, supported by East's random blocking and returning of anything hit towards him into the rafters, on to the penthouse or occasionally into the dedans, proved too much of a confusion for the Lord's regulars, who all spent too much time conspiring as to how to defeat each other while paying insufficient attention to the new kids, aged 70-plus and 66, on the block.

Thus Tony and Richard, while pleased to see them go down in a welter of discordant recrimination, were spared playing against Sam Leigh, Rodger Davis, Roger Pilgrim and Bomber. They still had to creep past Josh Farrall (7/2), cup donor Brian

Sharp (5/1) and Simon Martin (4/4, 40/30 on the bell), on their way to a final win over David Pearmain and Paul Cattermull (previous winners) by 9 games to 3.

Splendid event; excellent lunches, and a very good dinner on the Friday night in the committee room, addressed by Keith Bradshaw, the Tasmanian chief executive, who assured us he is not about to spend £400m of the members' funds raising the capacity of the ground from 23,000 to 25,000, or whatever the numbers are. All MCC members at RTC should try to play in this one in future years (Nick, this means you).

And, serendipitously for said East, the very next evening, Monday 8 February at Holyport, he won another title, securing the Brasenose Strollers Real Tennis Challenge Championship for 2009, when Robert Peel conceded 2009 was over with Richard two sets up in their best-of-13-set match. 2010 may bring a stronger challenge. Never before has, and never again will, your scribe won/win two titles in two days.

But then, flying Icarus-like too close to the sun, he was sent crashing to earth on Wednesday 10 February, when he top-edged an innocuous return of serve from Dr Feel Good Mulcahy into his eye and had to retire hurt.

Sic transit Gloria Mundi.

National League roundup

The National League is entering the crucial closing fixtures, and all of RTC's seven teams are still in the hunt for honours.

In the Premier Division, sponsored by Shilton Sharpe Quarry, Nick Wood and Ben Matthews have had some memorable moments in a topsy-turvy season. Nick bounced back from a heavy defeat on home turf by Bryn Sayers of Queen's to avenge that loss in the away fixture, while Ben has beaten the wily Andrew Lyons both home and away and signed off his RTC career with a thumping 6/3 6/0 win over a fine player in MCC's David Woodman.

Next up for Nick (and presumably Peter Wright in Ben's place) on 17 March is the small matter of a visit from

Rob Fahey, who is playing for the Middlesex University (Burroughs) club this season. As well as being a key match, it's also a chance to assess the fitness of the world champion less than two months away from his title defence.

In the lower divisions, our Division 2 team of Stef King, David Watson and Simon Barker are enjoying a fine season, with only our own Robert Hird (playing for Cambridge) having a better record than Stef. The Division 6 team are flying atop the table, with Charles Ashbourne and Fred Satow battling it out for the accolade of the division's most valuable player. And keep an eye out in Division 8, where a team that started slowly is finding its stride, especially the impressive Chris Gotla.

NATIONAL LEAGUE TABLES

PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	Pts
MURTC 1	5	4	25
Queens Club 1	6	3	24
RTC 1	6	3	21
MCC 1	5	2	11
Seacourt 1	4	1	10

DIVISION 1

Radley 1	6	4	30
Oxford 1	4	2	12
RTC 2	3	1	7
Petworth 1	3	1	7

DIVISION 2

Cambridge 1	6	5	31
RTC 3	5	4	25
Petworth 2	7	3	23
Seacourt 2	7	3	22
Hatfield/MURTC	4	2	14
Canford 1	4	1	9
Holyport 1	3	0	0

DIVISION 5

Prested Hall 2	5	4	28
Oratory 2	3	3	17
Canford 2	3	2	14
RTC 4	5	2	14
Oxford 3	5	1	13
Moreton Morrell 2	4	2	10
Petworth 3	3	0	2

DIVISION 6

RTC 5	7	6	38
Cambridge 6	6	5	31
MCC 3	7	4	28
MURTC 2	6	4	24
Oxford 4	6	2	18
Canford 3	5	3	17
Cambridge 5	6	0	8
Oratory 3	5	0	4

DIVISION 7

Oxford 5	6	6	34
Prested Hall 3	7	4	30
MURTC 3	7	4	28
RTC 6	6	4	24
Newmarket 1	8	3	21
Oratory 3	6	2	20
MCC 4	7	2	20
Radley 2	5	3	19
Holyport 2	7	2	18
Hatfield 2	7	3	17

DIVISION 8

Canford 4	4	3	21
Petworth 4	6	3	21
RTC 7	6	3	21
Moreton Morrell 3	6	2	20
Oxford 6	5	3	19
Queens 4	6	3	19
Prested Hall 4	4	2	14
Oratory 4	5	2	12

(The final league positions will determine the line-ups for semi-finals and finals to be played in May/June. Results on page 8)

Autumn Night Pennant

The crack outfit of John Dagnall, Owen Saunders and Martin Daly finished strongly to land the Autumn Night Pennant title (handicaps 30-45), downing table-toppers Chris Gotla, Julian Sheraton-Davis and Paul Newton in the final.

After Julian had nudged the favourites ahead with a tight 6/5 win over Owen, Chris easily took care of John before Martin controlled his game with Paul to leave the match finely balanced at 2/1.

In the first doubles match, John and Owen raced into a 5/1 lead, only for Chris and Julian to doggedly claw back the advantage and stun their opponents 6/5 to give their team a 3/1 lead. The underdogs stepped up a gear, however, completing 6/1 and 6/2 victories in the final two doubles matches. The second match finished in



Night hawks: John Dagnall, Owen Saunders and Martin Daly

the grand manner with an unstoppable force into the dedans by Owen.

With the number of sets won thus tied at 3/3, the teams could only be separated on games won, John, Owen and Martin having a clear 30/23 margin and therefore overall victory.

Martin Daly

Raiders from Rhode Island

Richard East on a hastily arranged match vs Newport, who stood in gamely for a snowbound Manchester team

1. Paddy Jenkins and Simon Edmond had a wonderful ding-dong, but Paddy is much too much of an English gentleman to relish the transfer to the Newport team. Last-gasp stuff.
2. Peter Ohlson tore into his opposition chairman John Murphy. However, at 5/0 he became confused by the changing odds and handicaps. I could sympathise about the way the marker treated him, if I could remember who it was.
3. Ian Mathers had the better of Skip Elliott from the off. The tennis was pretty random, with not nearly enough interference from the marker this time.

4. Peter Flood induced an unbelievable series of errors from Keith Smith. Perhaps Smudge's nerves had been shot on learning of the profession of his two Italian/American opponents.
5. Oliver Buckley and Dr Feel Good Mulcahy were their usual efficient selves; No Knees (as was) is lethal now he can both turn round and move.
6. Ian Mathers and Peter Ohlson overcame the mafiosi at huge risk to themselves to ensure the match win.
7. Smith and East slid from a dominant 7/4 to a 7/8 loss, which had Feel Good dancing around in glee.

RTC Top Ten

Leading handicaps
February 2010

1	Hugh Latham	2.4
2	Peter Wright	4.7
3	Dave Harms	6.2
4	Robert Hird	7.0
5	David Watson	11.3
6	Marcus Ward	12.2
7	Simon Barker	13.2
8	Nick Hatchett	16.3
9	James Watson	17.2
10	Mike Bray	18.1

The Royal Tennis Court Newsletter

*is published four times a year
and the editor would love any
contributions from members.
Please get in touch if you have
any ideas for the summer issue*

Editor: Simon Edmond
simonrichardedmond@
yahoo.co.uk

RESULTS

National League

Premier Division

MURTC 1 beat RTC 1, 2/1

Robert Fahey beat Nick Wood 6/2, 6/0;
Rod McNaughtan lost to Ben Matthews
2/6, 2/6; Fahey/McNaughtan beat Wood/
Matthews 8/3.

Queen's 1 lost to RTC 1, 1/2

Bryn Sayers lost to Nick Wood 4/6, 6/3
4/6; Andrew Lyons lost to Ben Matthews
4/6, 4/6; Sayers/Lyons beat Wood/
Matthews 8/5.

RTC 1 beat Seacourt 1, 2/1

Ben Matthews beat Matthew Ronaldson
6/3 6/2; Nick Wood lost to Chris Bray 1/6
3/6; Wood/Matthews beat Ronaldson/
Bray 8/3.

RTC 1 lost to MCC 1, 1/2

Ben Matthews beat David Woodman 6/3
6/0; Peter Wright lost to Jamie Douglas
5/6 4/6; Wright/Matthews lost to
Woodman/ Douglas 4/8.

Division 1

Oxford 1 beat RTC 2, 2/1

Radley 1 beat RTC 2, 3/0

Division 2

Holyport 1 lost to RTC 3, 0/3

RTC 3 beat Canford 1, 2/1

Seacourt 2 lost to RTC 3, 1/2

Division 5

Moreton Morrell 2 beat RTC 4, 2/1

Canford 2 beat RTC 4, 3/0

RTC 4 beat Prested Hall 2, 3/0

Prested Hall 2 beat RTC 4, 3/0

Petworth 3 lost to RTC 4, 1/2

Division 6

RTC 5 beat Canford 3, 3/0

RTC 5 beat Oxford 4, 2/1

MCC 3 lost to RTC 5, 1/2

Oratory 3 lost to RTC 5, 0/3

Canford 3 lost to RTC 5, 0/3

RTC 5 beat MCC 3, 2/1

Division 7

Oratory 4 beat RTC 6, 3/0

Newmarket 1 beat RTC 6, 2/1

RTC 6 beat Newmarket 1, 3/0

RTC 6 beat Holyport 2, 2/1

Division 8

RTC 7 beat Prested Hall 4, 2/1

Petworth 4 lost to RTC 7, 1/2

RTC 7 beat Queen's 4, 2/1

Barker-Camm Cup

Grade F final: Dorian Drew beat David Glover 6/1 6/2. **Grade E final:** David Lawrence beat Helen-Frances Pilkington 6/2 6/2. **Grade D final:** Fraser Shorey beat Owen Saunders 6/2 6/5. **Grade C finalists:** Fraser Shorey & Tom Cameron. **Grade B finalists:** Fred Satow & Geoffrey Russell.

Autumn Night Pennant Final

John Dagnall/Owen Saunders/Martin Daly beat Chris Gotla/Julian Sheraton-Davis/Paul Newton 8/6.

Singles: Saunders lost to Sheraton-Davis 5/6; Dagnall lost to Gotla 2/6; Daly beat Newton 6/2. **Doubles:** Dagnall/Saunders lost to Gotla/Sheraton-Davis 5/6; Dagnall/Daly beat Gotla/Newton 6/1; Saunders/Daly beat Sheraton-Davis/Newton 6/2.

Seal Salver

Semi-finals: Bernard Weatherill beat Brian Rich 9/5; Paddy Jenkins beat Graham Prain 9/6.

Final: Weatherill beat Jenkins 9/4.