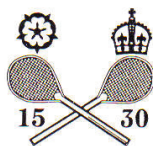


# THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT

## Hampton Court Palace



## FAMILY JEWELS

JAMES AND DAVID WATSON RETAIN  
THE HARRIS WATSON DOUBLES

*See page 3*

The Spring Newsletter 2011  
*Number ninety-five*

# chairman's chat

Following the huge turnout for the Christmas Carol Service, I am delighted to see that we have a full house for the dinner on 26 March at Hampton Court Golf Club, when, among other things, we will pay tribute to playing successes last season.

This leads me neatly into the playing success (almost!) at the Boomerang Cup in Melbourne in January. This event is well documented elsewhere but I must mention that all three RTC teams reached the quarter-finals and, although only one progressed a stage further, the losses were by the narrowest of margins. The tournament and its associated events is a tremendous occasion and I commend it to fellow members who can not only spare the time but can also contemplate the resulting bar bills! The facilities of the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club would be the envy of most, its location so close to the centre of the vibrant, cosmopolitan and sports-mad city of Melbourne is perfect, and the hospitality of its members quite exceptional.

So the sporting treble that I dared mention last time did not quite materialise. Nevertheless, we did win the Ashes and, contrary to the naysayers, I can at least say I have seen a Briton in a Grand Slam final! While the two tennis courts, squash court, fitness gym, swimming pool and viewing gallery/bar of the RMTTC may be beyond our wildest dreams, members will have noticed the work to improve the entrance and viewing corridor alongside our court. This is a result of an ongoing dialogue with Hampton Court Palace and is the first stage of a joint effort to improve the physical appearance and enliven

the interpretive experience for visitors.

I can also tell members that we are looking at ways to enhance the offering of club merchandise and Nick Wood is planning to expand this selection over the coming year. On which note the board encourages anyone who wants to commission team clothing for special events or teams to order the goods through Nick and his team. This is a modest but essential source of income and we want to support the professionals as much as we can.

I am pleased to tell you that Owen Saunders has agreed to join the board, at the same time as Peter Ohlson has stepped down (the outstanding business with the T&RA having been resolved). For those of you who don't know him, Owen is an active playing and social member and is also involved in organising a National League team for the club. Owen will be formally proposed for election for a standard three-year term at the AGM on 15 May and, despite his being a chartered accountant, we know he will make a valuable contribution to the team.

Finally I would like to remind members that the summer barbecue will be held on Saturday 16 July and will coincide with the King's Goblet (summer doubles), so please make a note in your diaries and keep an eye out for competition entry forms and tickets.

**Paddy Sweetnam**



## DATES FOR THE DIARY

### British Ladies Masters

- From **18-20 March** the Royal Tennis Court will host the British Ladies Masters Championship (for players aged 40 years and over), 24 years after it hosted the first of these events. The main tournament will be played level as the best of three first-to-six sets and always produces some exciting matches, so why not pop down and watch?

### Club Dinner

- Hampton Court Golf Club, **Saturday 26 March** – tickets sold out.

### National League

- RTC's final home IRTPA National League Premier Division match of the season will take place on **Wednesday 6 April**. For the third time this season Peter Wright will take on Chris Chapman, who is moonlighting for MCC (having also filled in for Queen's and Prested), while Nick Wood faces world champion Rob Fahey in the top singles. Tickets are on sale now from the professionals and are running out fast (prices on p7). If you haven't seen Fahey play before, don't miss this chance to catch a legend in action.

### Annual General Meeting

- Club rooms, **Sunday 15 May**, 11am.

## COMING UP

### RTC

- 18-20 Mar:** British Ladies Masters
- 26 Mar:** Club Dinner (Hampton Court Golf Club; sold out)
- 6 Apr:** National League Premier Division: RTC v MCC (see left)

### ELSEWHERE

- 19-28 Mar:** Amateur Championships (Queen's)
- 25-27 Mar:** Over-50 Amateur Singles (Petworth)
- 26 Mar:** Tennis & Rackets Association AGM (Queen's)
- 27 Mar-3 Apr:** US Open (Philadelphia)
- 12-17 Apr:** British Ladies Open (Seacourt)
- 26 Apr-1 May:** Kressman Trophy (for amateurs aged over 50, Bordeaux)
- 3-7 May:** Australian Ladies Open (Melbourne)
- 10-14 May:** World Ladies Championship (Melbourne)
- 29 May-5 Jun:** US Pro Singles (Newport)

# Watsons waltz to doubles title

*It's a special birthday for James as father and son outclass Barker and Sohl*

**D**avid Watson and his son James have retained the Harris Watson club doubles title they won for the first time as a pair last year. Having eased through to the final painlessly, they might have expected to have to work hard against Simon Barker and James Sohl, but as it turned out they were only occasionally stretched on their way to a 6-2, 6-3 success.

The final was the climax to a second weekend of competition that had seen several tight matches and a couple of upsets. The beauty of the Harris Watson is the way the draw is staggered, so you enter at a point that is suitable to your ability – this means many pairings get to win one match before pitting their wits against stronger opposition... and then there are those (such as your editor) who lose to the 'weaker' pair and miss out on a crack at the big guns.

Still, the semi-finals had a familiar look to them. The Watsons, already in celebratory mood as it was James's birthday, were up against David Blizard and Geoffrey Russell, who had come from a set down to knock out Bernard Weatherill and Fred Satow the day before. A repeat of those heroics was never on the cards against David and James, whose Boomerang Cup trip (see p4) will have helped to hone their understanding as a pairing. The

Watsons advanced with the loss of just one game – an ominous warning.

Simon Barker and James Sohl had what looked on paper to be a sterner test in their semi-final, against Phil Dunn and a resurgent Karen Hird. Phil has been in fine form since joining RTC last year, and for periods of this match



*Wine but no cigar: runners-up Simon Barker and James Sohl*

he traded shots comfortably with the two 14-handicappers. Karen, as ever, was volleying expertly and returning serve neatly into the corners.

Simon and James took the first set by a slightly flattering 6-2 margin, but they trailed 2-3 in the second and then 0-40 at 3-3. As is often the case, the seventh game was the pivotal one, as Simon and James recovered from that 0-40 deficit

to move ahead. Soon it was all over 6-4 – a banana skin nicely sidestepped.

And so the expected final was upon us. It was supposed to be a tight affair, but after four games the Watsons had lost precisely one point. They were on fire, playing faultless tennis and outlasting their opponents in the longer rests. Simon and James took the next two games, but eventually too many balls went up on to the penthouse and the Watsons made them pay. 6-2.

Momentum ebbs and flows in real tennis, however, and Simon and James took advantage of a drop in the Watsons' level of play to move ahead 3-1 in the second. A sharp forehand volley from James W clawed one game back, and after another quick game to make it 3-3 we had another tight seventh game. A double fault by James W landed the Watsons in a 0-30 hole, but he made amends with another excellent volleyed winner to give them advantage. After a couple of deuces, a shot round the main and back walls dropped between James and Simon, neither of whom had made a call to his partner.

That 4-3 lead soon became 5-3, and when James W fooled James S with a demi-pique that missed the penthouse, the Watsons were champions again.

**Simon Edmond**

## University challenge

This year's Varsity Match at Lord's had significant RTC representation, with Sam Halliday playing first string for Oxford and Robert Hird and James Watson first and second respectively for the victorious Cambridge team.

After Cambridge had won the Friday doubles 2-0, Oxford sprung a surprise by winning the opening two singles on Saturday. The pressure was on James, but he showed no sign of it as he put on an impressively consistent display to beat Simon Roach 6-1, 6-2. Robert duly wrapped things up by beating Sam, but not without trouble as the left-hander managed to knock Robert out of his comfort zone for long periods. The final scoreline of 6-2, 6-3 did not reflect what a struggle it was for Robert. That left the final score 4-2 overall to Cambridge – an exact reversal of last year's Oxford win, which had broken a long run of Cambridge dominance.

In the women's match, Oxford took advantage of not having to take on Karen Hird, who graduated last summer.

All the Saturday action was broadcast live online on [realtennis.tv](http://realtennis.tv), in what was another successful outing for this trailblazing enterprise.

## Hit the road, Stef

Once again, Stef King is embarking on a challenge! This time he returns to the London Marathon, hoping to beat his previous time of 3hr 2sec and break the three-hour barrier.

He will be running for the charity Spinal Injuries Association. "Over the last 18 months or so, the experiences of a couple of friends have made me more aware of the life-changing impact of a spinal injury," says Stef. In the words of one of those friends, "their counselling, support and practical help is priceless, words cannot express the enormity of what they do."

If you'd like to encourage Stef and support his chosen charity, please sponsor him by using the form in the pro shop or by going to [www.justgiving.com/stefking2011](http://www.justgiving.com/stefking2011).





# RTC in Oz: Boomerang Cup

Owen Saunders reports from the world's biggest assembly of real tennis players

## Hopeful start

It's sunny, I'm at the start of a two-week holiday, and England won the Ashes yesterday. It's a good day to be an Englishman in Australia. The tenth Boomerang Cup starts today. Hampton Court's three teams – the Royals, the Banshees and the Tudors – have arrived in Melbourne with high hopes of success.

The main aim of day one is to stay awake and beat jet lag. The last thing I need is a team meeting – an astonishing attempt by Richard "Skipper" East to introduce a level of organisation never before experienced by the Royals. Fortunately, after two minutes of seriousness about team selection, the meeting descends into farce.

Much more helpful in keeping me awake is the opening night's handicap doubles. In the first match, former world title challenger Julian Snow shows that two more years haven't mellowed him, as he threatens to wrap his racket round the head of one of his opponents. In the second match, the highly rated Banshees pair of Sue Haswell and Andrew Gould live up to their billing as one of the favourites.

## Up and running

In our first game, against the Cardinals, Simon "Rain Man" Edmond and I are paired against our host Richard Allen. Richard has already been a remarkably generous host, offering up his house to Rain Man and me while he and his family stay down on the coast. But there is no room for sentimentality at the Boomerang, and we win comfortably.

An excellent team performance sees us win 3-1. Dr Robin "Feelgood" Mulcahy destroys his opponents with ruthless determination. Nicholas "Nick" Carew Hunt is his usual canny self. The only concern is the form of Paddy "Soft Hands" Sweetnam, who is on a one-man mission to destroy the penthouse by launching the balls on to it at close to the speed of sound.

The Banshees and the Tudors also get points on the board, beating Hobart Devils and the Newmarket Nasties respectively. At this early stage the Banshees, led by Susie Falkner, look like a good bet. Robert Falkner and Alec Miller are playing out of their skin, and I can't help but notice that Sue Haswell



*The Banshees: Tim Lintott, Andrew Gould, Susie Falkner, Sue Haswell, Robert Falkner and Alec Miller*

is not exactly devastated by her recent handicap drift from 24 to 32.

The Tudors suffer an early blow as Chris Clarke (on loan from Petworth) withdraws due to injury, leaving them with the minimum of four players. They will be up against it as they will be giving away some large handicaps.

## Building up momentum

The president's welcome cocktail party takes place at the Melbourne Club on Collins Street. This is a swish club full of deep leather armchairs, mahogany bookcases and portraits of dead rich men with huge sideburns. Impressive, but what really impresses me is that the waiters are carrying not only bottles of wine, but also litre bottles of VB lager.

On Tuesday we have our second game, against Tony Poolman's Coup de Tems. We win 3-1. Again Feelgood and Nick are impeccable, but Soft Hands continues to hit the ball with such violence that I'm starting to think he's got a personal vendetta against it.

On Thursday the mid-tournament dinner is held in the members' dining room at the MCG. This is a cracking venue and the food and service are up to the MCG's usual high standard.

## Clinical progress

In our third game on Friday, against Les Poseurs, we win the first two rubbers 8-0 and 8-1. Soft Hands still can't buy a win as he goes down 6-8. I think he's been secretly heading off to Queensland's mineral-rich country to keep his hands in shape by ripping granite from the mountainside with his

bare hands. Three wins means we are definitely through to the second round.

The Tudors are doing just enough and the Banshees are progressing serenely. The Tudors are getting to grips with the handicap restrictions, and the Banshees are being spurred on by the stentorian tones of Robert shouting what sounds uncannily like "Ban cheese".

## Beaten by a whisker

On the second Tuesday I have my one conversation of the fortnight with Julian Snow. He thinks his team need to buck up their ideas and prepare in a more focused manner: "When they turn up they look like they need their mum to tell them what to do. When I turn up at the club, I'm ready for the kill."

Despite losing 1-3 to Manchester, we progress to the second round, where Hatfield await us. Despite Rain Man and I losing a pulsating opening rubber 7-8, the middle order do us proud and leave Skipper and me only needing to take one game to win the tie.

In the quarter-final against Seacourt Sandscratchers, the match goes to sudden death, with the match tied at 2-2 and 27 games all. The rules state that the tie-break must be played by the final pairing. Unable to bring on fresh legs, Skipper and Feelgood (combined age: 198) must go into battle one more time, narrowly losing. We retire to the bar to lick our wounds.

In the all-Hampton Court quarter-final, Banshees take advantage of an injured Tudors team to progress into the semi (Mark McMurrugh has pulled his calf muscle but must play on as they only have four players).

Somehow Rain Man and I make it into the semi-final of the handicap doubles on the Saturday morning. By an unfortunate coincidence, Friday is the only night I can see a friend from home who lives in Melbourne. Seven-hour drinking sessions are considered unsuitable preparation for 8.45am matches. Despite my meat pie and Coca-Cola breakfast, we lose 8-5. Rain Man is too busy crossing me off his Christmas card list to chastise me.

Back in the Boomerang, the Banshees face our conquerors in the semi-final. They have their chances but lose by two

*continued on p5* ➡

# A Field day for MCC

*A strong visiting line-up ousts RTC from the Field Trophy*

➤ *Boomerang Cup, continued from p4*

games after Sue and Tim Lintott are faced with the near-impossible task of winning the last rubber 8-1. Susie looks like someone who just put the winning lottery ticket into the washing machine. Seacourt's run is finally ended by Snow's Galacticos in the final, as Galacticos win comfortably. A Melbourne team wins the Boomerang for the sixth time in ten tournaments.

## *Drowning our sorrows*

The end-of-tournament presentation dinner is held in the Melbourne Museum. The service is shambolic, the food uninspiring, and the pro-am auction more than awkward as it's clear the professionals hate every minute of it (but at least it raises quite a bit of money). Skipper East's Queen's Speech offends 40 per cent of the audience, amuses 40 per cent and goes straight over the heads of the other 20 per cent – these statistics are a distinct improvement on his career average.

Back to RMTC at midnight for a nightcap. I am tucked up in bed by 5am.



*Richard East takes a dedans nap, while Paddy Sweetnam moves his soft hands*

## *Looking back*

So another Boomerang Cup passes by without victory. With three Hampton Court teams in one side of the quarter-final draw, we may not get such a good opportunity to win for a long time. Along the way, old friendships were renewed, plenty of competitive tennis was played in a great spirit, fine wine and food was abundant, and we got to watch great sport (international cricket, Australian Open lawn tennis) in the world's sporting capital.

I leave the final word to David Parker of the Cardinals. While watching the Boomerang final David gives me possibly the highest praise I can imagine: "Jeez, Owen, for two weeks I haven't seen you without either a racket or a bottle of beer in your hand."

**R**TC's run in the 2010-11 Field Trophy came to an end at the semi-final stage, thanks to an MCC line-up that looked formidable on paper and managed to live up to that billing with a 4-1 success.

The size of the task facing RTC was obvious from the handicaps of the MCC pair in the opening match, the No 2 doubles pairing. Up against Phil Dunn and Tom Freeman were a pair off 12 and 13, and though the young improvers put up a valiant fight they went down 2-6, 5-6.

Next up was the top singles match, in which David Watson found himself across the net from an RTC member, one David Harms, who had been tempted across the river to represent MCC. Despite our man's best efforts and some marvellous points, Harms is too classy an operator to slip up, and he prevailed 6-2, 6-2, a scoreline that I'm sure even the winner would admit was slightly harsh on David.

All was not yet lost for the home team at this point – the prevailing opinion beforehand had been that the opening two matches would be the hardest to win. In the No 2 singles there seemed to be more hope of success, with club champion Simon Barker up against T&RA chairman William Maltby. The two played out an entertaining and sometimes brilliant, sometimes error-strewn

match that always seemed destined to go to 5-5 in the third set – and so it proved. Simon had led 4-1 and 5-3 in the first set and lost it; he had trailed 2-4 in the second and won it. The third was always tight, and Simon had one match point before William snatched victory 6-5 to seal overall victory for MCC. A thriller.

It was left to James Watson and our all-conquering first doubles pairing of James Sohl and Karen Hird to salvage some pride. In the final singles, James allowed the hard-hitting Mark Mathias to control the first set, and though he improved in the second it was not quite enough – 1-6, 5-6. James and Karen were in theory up against it in their match, too, with Neil Roxburgh and Mark Howard both having significantly better handicaps. But the RTC pair thrive on their underdog status and had won the first set before the MCC duo had got going, helped by Karen's lightning-quick reactions and James's albatross-like reach and thunderous volleying. The inevitable MCC fightback came, but James and Karen steeled themselves for a final effort and triumphed 6-5 in the deciding set.

So, there was to be no upset this year, as MCC advanced to a final against Seacourt. For RTC's elite amateurs, the planning for 2011-12's assault has already begun...

# Lathom Browne latest

**T**hanks to the sterling efforts of the professionals, this season's Lathom Browne Cup is progressing slightly more according to schedule than last year's. Most of the eight grades are close to completion, with many grade finals already played or in the diary.

In grade A Tom Freeman sadly had to retire while leading his final against Philip Squire, while the first grade B semi-final saw Owen Saunders upset Lathom Browne specialist Nicola Doble. He now awaits Paul Wright or George Sleightholme in the B final.

Grade C has seen Michael Day progress serenely through the rounds – a reflection of his improvement over the

winter. He will face Adam Stebbings or the gifted Olly Watson. James Simpson is into the grade D final, while David Stephens has wrapped up grade E and his place in the quarter-finals, having defeated Elvira Campione 9-5.

In grade F, John Harbord-Hammond may have made himself a marked man by eliminating the bookies' favourite, the rapidly improving Dick Cowling, who had advanced well beyond the 50 handicap he was playing off in this competition.

Grade G sees Richard Pettit up against Robin Mulcahy, and while grade H is still at the semi-final stage Andy Anderson's huge wins to date have not gone unnoticed.

# National League update

As we approach the business end of the National League season, most of RTC's six teams are in the thick of the scrap to be involved in the final stages.

In the **Premier Division**, Nick Wood and Peter Wright have found it tough. Pete in particular has had to take on some formidable opponents – not least our own Chris Chapman, who has filled in for injured/unavailable players for both Prested Hall and Queen's and will be doing so against Peter again at RTC when MCC visit on 6 April.

Nick has had a couple of fine wins, gaining revenge at Prested for a home defeat by his former protégé Ben Matthews and more recently destroying world No 4 Bryn Matthews of Queen's at RTC. In the latter match Nick used his railroad to great effect and was rewarded by plenty of returns thudding into the service penthouse. Bryn is playing a forceful game these days, but on this occasion he could not hit his targets and Nick made very few errors – in this mood on his home turf he is a nightmare for anyone, as Rob Fahey had found out in the past.

Despite that 6-2, 6-2 win for Nick, however, Chris's presence (in place of the sick Andrew Lyons) tilted the tie in favour of Queen's. Peter played exceptionally in their duel but Chris always had enough in him to control it, and in the decisive doubles Chris's unfeasibly hard hitting came to the fore.

With two matches left, it's unlikely that Nick and Peter will be involved in the knockout stages, with Fahey's MCC

unbeaten and Queen's and Prested lined up for the eliminator final.

In **Division 1**, Chris Chapman and Charlie Crossley have had a mixed season but look certain to be in the top three and thus in knockout action in the spring. Their last three games are all against fellow contenders, including Petworth's unbeaten duo of Paul Knox and Tom Durack.

Anything could happen in **Division 2**, a larger league with no dominant team. The star for RTC has been James Sohl, who has had some memorable wins, notably over Mark Mathias at Lord's.

**Division 4** looks to be facing serious fixture congestion, with only RTC having completed half their matches so far. As a result they sit atop the table, with Charles Ashbourne (last season's Division 6 most valuable player) unbeaten in his three matches.

Our **Division 5** team may sit only third with two defeats from four matches, but with three of their remaining four matches being on home ground they look well placed. No 1 Tom Freeman is a real force on his own court, thanks in part to his late-night practices with Charlie Crossley.

RTC is on top of the pile in **Division 7**, although unbeaten Oxford have a game in hand. A top-two place and a home semi-final look highly attainable, especially with all four of the squad having good winning records.

The **Division 8** team are specialising in gut-wrenchingly close defeats but remain right in the hunt and appear to have their toughest tests behind them.

## Virgona finally has his day

Rob Fahey may have added to his long list of major titles by winning the British Open in December, but he met his match at the end of January in Melbourne, coming unstuck against the world No 2 Steve Virgona in the Australian Open final.

Virgona had run the world champion close at Queen's, and back in the duo's homeland he went one step further, prevailing 6-5, 6-4, 6-4 to win his third grand slam title. He had summarily dispatched RTC's Chris Chapman in the quarter-finals before a tough semi with Bryn Sayers, while Fahey had eased past Ben Matthews in his semi.

Ben had at least had the satisfaction of dispatching the reigning champion, Ruairaidh Gunn, in the last eight.

Straight after the Australian Open came the world doubles, also at Melbourne. With the world's dominant two players now on the same side of the net the result was never in doubt, but there were still some intriguing matches. Chris Chapman and Ruairaidh Gunn, for example, fought out a long semi-final with Julian Snow and Ben Matthews, with Snow and Matthews sneaking through to the first-to-five-sets final. Five sets were all that Fahey and Virgona required, however.

## NATIONAL LEAGUE TABLES

### PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	Pts
MCC	5	5	31
Prested Hall	6	4	27
Queen's	5	3	21
<b>RTC</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>
MURTC	4	0	2

### DIVISION 1

Petworth	4	4	26
Oxford	4	3	23
<b>RTC</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>
Queen's	5	1	7
Leamington	4	0	0

### DIVISION 2

MURTC/Hatfield	6	5	32
<b>RTC</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>
Queen's	6	3	21
MCC	6	3	20
Seacourt	5	3	19
Oratory	4	2	14
Cambridge	5	1	9
Petworth	3	0	3

### DIVISION 4

<b>RTC</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>
Oratory	3	2	14
Prested Hall	2	2	12
Queen's	2	0	4
Oxford	3	0	2

### DIVISION 5

Moreton Morrell	4	3	17
MURTC	4	2	16
<b>RTC</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>
Seacourt	2	2	10
Canford	4	0	8

### DIVISION 7

<b>RTC</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33</b>
Oxford	5	5	29
Newmarket	5	3	21
Paris (Prested-based)	5	2	18
Prested Hall	4	3	17
Radley	5	1	11
Holyport	4	0	4
Hardwick House	4	0	0

### DIVISION 8

Petworth	5	4	28
MURTC	5	2	20
Prested Hall	5	3	19
<b>RTC</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>
Hatfield	4	2	16
Canford	5	2	16
Oxford	4	3	15
Oratory	5	1	11
Newmarket	4	1	5

*(The final league positions will determine the line-ups for semi-finals, eliminator finals and finals to be played in April–June.)*



## Booking system

At present we are experiencing an extremely high demand for court time. (Court usage: January 97%, February 98%.) This is mainly due to the enthusiasm of the membership and also, with the recent additional service of the web-based booking sheet, the membership are much more proactive when looking for games.

The introduction of the web-based booking sheet allows those who are keen to play to find courts for themselves rather than having to wait for the pros to call. It also allows the members who have not played much to see what is available over the coming weeks/months so they can get back involved. We have deliberately kept the system of phoning or emailing to arrange bookings. Never fear – we will always strive to keep the personal touch by phoning to find games and to confirm bookings.

## Balls

For those who aren't aware, a lot of time goes into making each ball fit the parameters set out in the rules of the game (weight 71-78 grams, diameter 62-65mm). We are forever looking at ways to improve the quality of the balls; at present we are using a system to create sets of balls that are consistent to specific grades with in the parameters.

Sadly, we are experiencing some difficulties with the quality of the cloth used to cover the balls, which is wearing out much sooner than before. As you can imagine, with over 15 hours of play a day, a set will not last long on court. The Tennis & Rackets Association, which supplies the cloth, is talking to the manufacturers to resolve the problem. In the meantime, your team of professionals will be working overtime to continue to provide a high level of ball quality for you.

## The court

In and around the court there has been quite a lot going on. Since the palace completed the roof repairs ahead of schedule, the RTC has set about many minor maintenance jobs, some of which you will hopefully notice and others that are not so obvious. By the time you read this article, the tennis court corridor will have been repaired and decorated, making for a brighter and cleaner passage as you enter and leave the club.

On the main-wall side of the court you may have noticed that some wire netting has been installed to prevent balls from becoming lodged up by the lights. (a great relief to the pros).

Due to all the dust created by the works, it has been obvious that the court

floor has been slippery; as a result, in addition to cleaning the court daily we have been (and will continue for the near future) deep-cleaning the court floor once a month. We thank you for your patience.

## Chris Chapman

As the past months have unfolded, I am more and more impressed with Chris's improvements on court. His dedication and training is showing real developments. By the time you read this, Chris will have competed in the European Open at MCC, where he faces the world champion in the first round, and later in March he will be travelling to Philadelphia to compete in the US Open, partnering Ben Matthews in the doubles.

## Upcoming event

**The world champion comes to the Royal Tennis Court**

**IRTPA National League – sponsored by [www.luxuryfamilyvillas.com](http://www.luxuryfamilyvillas.com)**

**The Royal Tennis Court v MCC**

*Wednesday 6 April 2011, 6pm*

Nick Wood v Rob Fahey

Peter Wright v Chris Chapman (!)

**Tickets on sale:**

Dedans front row: £20

Dedans back row: £18

Top gallery: £10

## Wood's Words

*Head pro Nick Wood on a crucial aspect of everyone's game: the volley*

**T**he volley could be argued as one of the easiest shots in the game – and yet it often ends up as a mis-hit, a wild shot or even, a non-attempt at the ball, as you watch it sail into the dedans (mentioning no names).

There are many problems to overcome with the volley: the pace on the ball when being struck hard at the winning openings, the lack of preparation, a desire to whack the volley. To help with these issues, I would like to concentrate on the timing of the volley.

Firstly, to sight the ball is not easy. The ball leaves your opponent's racket some 80 feet away and travels over the net,

striking no further surface, and sometimes it travels hard and sometimes slow.

With nothing but the strike of the ball from your opponent's racket to go on, one has very little information to process to help with the timing of the volley. The lack of information hinders the ability to sight the ball accurately until the very last second. This can lead to a swipe or a lunge at the ball, creating a collision of two moving objects (racket and ball), making good timing even more difficult to achieve.

As the path of the ball gives little information, you have to remain patient and allow the ball to arrive

in your hitting zone, thus creating fractionally more time and allowing you to keep composed. Holding your racket in the hitting zone provides a sturdier racket, giving the ball a strong surface to rebound from.

So, when anticipating a volley, make sure your racket is well prepared by holding in the hitting zone (ie do not take the racket back), move your feet to position yourself as well as possible and allow the ball to strike the strong racket head. You will be surprised at how easy the volley will feel when timed well.

Good luck. Until our next encounter!

# Generation games

*Owen Saunders reports on valiant efforts by RTC pairings at the National Fathers and Sons tournament*

The 2011 T&RA National Fathers & Sons Tournament took place at Leamington over New Year, with the Royal Tennis Court represented by Julian & Guy Rawstorne and Glyn & Owen Saunders.

A clash with the Boomerang Cup in Melbourne meant that the field for this open tournament was somewhat depleted, with RTC's David & James Watson and Richard & Ben East among the absentees.

The event comprises two parallel tournaments, one off level and one off handicap. The RTC pairs had no realistic chance in the level tournament, with previous winners Richard & Tom Seymour Mead and Queen's Club's John & Henry Prens the clear favourites. In the pulsating final of the level tournament the Prens beat the Seymour Meads 8/7.

In the handicap event, both the Rawstorne and Saunders pairings' main challenge was to deal with the wide handicap differences between father and son (approximately 25 handicap points in both cases). The other big challenge was keeping warm on court, as temperatures plummeted towards freezing.

Owen and Glyn Saunders won all their group games, mainly thanks to

Glyn's excellent serving that belied his 59 handicap. Their best victory of those early stages came against the Prens – John is a 12 handicap player (not to mention a former world champion at rackets!).

The Rawstornes played well but never quite got into their stride, and were eventually put out convincingly by the Seymour Meads. The Saunders progressed and won a nailbiting semi-final against Marek & Chris



*Runners-up Owen and Glyn Saunders (right) with eventual winners Pete and Bob Brown of Oxford*

Stefanowicz, with the match going to 40-40 in the deciding game.

In the final they came up against Bob & Pete Brown from Oxford, whom they beaten 6/5 in the group stages the day before. Having won the toss, Owen's first two serves were volleyed back for short chases, and the RTC pair didn't make it back up to the service end for the rest of the match! The Browns were inspired and deservedly won the match 6/0.

## RTC Top Ten

Leading handicaps  
March 2011

1	Peter Wright	4.8
2	Dave Harms	5.8
3	Robert Hird	7.1
4	David Watson	12.5
5	Simon Barker	14.1
6	James Sohl	14.2
7	Nick Hatchett	14.6
8	James Watson	15.4
9	James Rothman	20.0
10	Philip Dunn	20.4

## 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, either via the professionals or by email at the address below.*

Editor: Simon Edmond  
simonrichardedmond@  
yahoo.co.uk

## Seal Salver

It wouldn't be the Seal Salver without a lengthy over-run, and the 2009-10 tournament has done just that. As the newsletter went to press, the 2008-09 finalists, Bernard Weatherill and Paddy Jenkins, looked likely to face each other again. Their semi-final opponents trying to prevent a rematch are Philip Squire and Paddy Sweetnam respectively.

Meanwhile, the 2010-11 tournament is already under way...

## Notes from a Duffer SCIENCE

*Think about stance, slice, pace and Other things hypothetical. But all I want is to get the bloody ball O'erthenetical.*

**Martin Bronstein**

## RESULTS

### National League

#### Premier Division

RTC beat MURTC 2/1

Nick Wood beat David Woodman 6/2 6/4; Peter Wright lost to Matty Ronaldson 6/5 5/6 3/5 retd; Wood & Wright beat Woodman & Ronaldson 8/4.

MCC beat RTC 3/0

Rob Fahey beat Nick Wood 6/0 6/4; Jamie Douglas beat Peter Wright 6/4 6/1; Fahey & Douglas beat Wood & Wright 8/5.

Prested Hall beat RTC 2/1

Ben Matthews lost to Nick Wood 4/6 5/6; Ricardo Smith beat Peter Wright 6/3 6/4; Matthews & Smith beat Wood & Wright 8/5.

RTC lost to Queen's 1/2

Nick Wood beat Bryn Sayers 6/2 6/2; Peter Wright lost to Chris Chapman 4/6 2/6; Wood & Wright lost to Sayers & Chapman 4/8.

### Lathom Browne Cup

#### Grade winners so far:

Grade A: Philip Squire  
Grade E: David Stephens  
Grade F: John Harbord-Hammond

### Harris Watson Trophy

**Semi-finals:** David Watson & James Watson beat Geoffrey Russell & David Blizard 6/1 6/0; Simon Barker & James Sohl beat Karen Hird & Phil Dunn 6/2 6/4. **Final:** Watson & Watson beat Barker & Sohl 6/2 6/3.

### Barker Camm Cup

**C Grade, semi-finals:** Fraser Shorey beat Michael Day 6/2 6/3; Chris Gotla beat Mike Raitt 4/6 6/5 6/5.

**B Grade, semi-finals:** Jed Dalton beat Geoffrey Russell 6/2 6/4; Tom Freeman beat Simon Edmond 6/0 6/3.