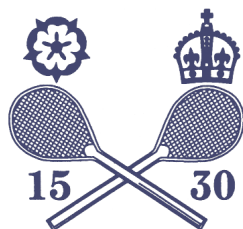


THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT

Hampton Court Palace



STOOPING TO CONQUER

CHRIS CHAPMAN BROKE NEW GROUND IN THE AUSTRALIAN
OPEN – AND HE WASN'T THE ONLY RTC SUCCESS STORY

Read more on page 4

The Spring Newsletter 2015

Number 110

Chairman's Chat



Congratulations to Harriet Ingham, who won the Ladies' Australian Open in January, and to Chris Chapman, who reached his first major final in Melbourne before finishing as runner-up to the world No. 1, Camden Riviere. Best wishes to Chris for a speedy recovery after his unfortunate head injury in the US Open in Boston (see page 4). Congratulations also to David and Oliver Watson for winning the Fathers and Sons tournament at Leamington Spa.

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, Historic Royal Palaces will this summer be undertaking major repairs to the court supporting posts and carrying out other essential works. The erection of scaffolding will commence on the outside of the building at the beginning of April and on the court itself on 1 June, and should be removed by the beginning of September.

While the scaffolding is erected inside the court, we also aim to install a new LED lighting system. Once the scaffolding has been removed from court, we have set aside a further two weeks to undertake much-needed maintenance work to the court floor. It is therefore anticipated that the court will reopen on Monday 14 September 2015. Owing to the nature of the works, and for health and safety reasons, members will not have access to the club while the work is being carried out.

Following discussions with other clubs nearby, we have been able to arrange for members to have access to Holyport and Petworth House while our own court is out of use. On behalf of the Board and members I should like to express my thanks to the management and professionals of the two clubs for their assistance. Details of the clubs and precise arrangements are detailed on page 3.

Looking rather further ahead, East Molesey Cricket Club (which is located about half a mile away from Hampton Court Palace, on the other side of Hampton Court Bridge) is currently looking at rebuilding its pavilion and providing indoor cricket facilities. One option being considered is the possibility of building a real tennis court attached to the new pavilion on this site. This project is at a very early stage and many practical, financial and issues of joint sharing will need to be properly evaluated and resolved before it can become a reality. We at RTC are currently providing some advice and support for this potentially exciting new real tennis facility.

Julian Sheraton-Davis

The annual **CAROL SERVICE** was attended by just over 200 members and guests in December in the magnificent Chapel Royal. The choir of the Chapel Royal were marvellous and were heartily accompanied by those present. Afterwards we repaired to the court for the traditional mulled wine and mince pies. Many thanks to Helen Crossley for organising the event so smoothly.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Pol Roger Trophy Final

☛ As you can read on page 3, the RTC team have reached the final of this team competition against Seacourt and will enjoy home advantage on **Sunday 15 March**. Tension is guaranteed, as is fine tennis.

National League Premier Division

☛ The world champions are coming to town: Chris Chapman and Peter Wright welcome Holyport, aka the Faheys, on **Saturday 28 March**.

Barker Camm Cup

☛ The race for the club championship begins in earnest here, as the top players compete over the weekend of **18-19 April**.

Annual General Meeting

☛ This will take place on **Sunday 17 May**, possibly followed by the Barker Camm Cup final (tbc).

COMING UP

RTC

15 Mar: Pol Roger Trophy final: RTC v Seacourt

22 Mar: RTC v Brigands (social)

28 Mar: RTC v Holyport (NL Premier Division)

18-19 Apr: Barker Camm Cup Grade A (club champ'ship)

17 May: Annual General Meeting

ELSEWHERE

11 Mar: Leamington v RTC (NL Premier Division)

19 Mar: Queen's v RTC (NL Premier Division)

21-22 Mar: U12, U15 & U19 Doubles Champs (Holyport)

27-29 Mar: Henry Leaf Cup (schools old boys, Queen's)

6-12 Apr: Ladies' British Open (Seacourt)

11-18 Apr: Bathurst Cup (int'l amateur team event, Hobart)

13-19 Apr: Ladies' World Championship (Leamington)

24-26 Apr: T&RA Category A (hcp 0-9, Oxford)

25-26 Apr: Over-70 Amateur Champs (Holyport)

8-10 May: Over-40 Open Singles (Seacourt)

11-24 May: Over-50, 60 & 70 Championships & international team events (Cambs, Newmarket, Prested)

The home stretch

Sunday 15 March will see the Royal Tennis Court team contest the final of the Pol Roger Trophy, the national inter-club team competition – and best of all, they'll be on familiar ground

When the draw was made for the 2014-15 Pol Roger Trophy, it seemed as if fate was making up for the RTC team's tough run of away fixtures in recent years. This time the team's route to the final consisted of two home matches – and, offering a juicy carrot to our team, the club would be hosting the final.

Quarter-final

The first visitors were Manchester, winners of the second-tier Field Trophy in 2013-14. On paper the RTC squad had a clear edge, but skipper Phil Dunn was taking no chances and sent out a team designed to have three 'bankers': Peter Wright in the top singles and two strong doubles pairings.

First up was the No 2 doubles, in which Nick Hatchett joined the captain. Looking at their handicaps the Manchester pair were up against it, but they put up an impressively stern fight, volleying bravely and adeptly and forcing some errors from Phil at the back of the court. But the RTC pair never really looked like losing, and a 6-3 6-1 win was soon secured.

Next, Peter Wright took young Richard Owen (the world No 5 at rackets) to school. The visiting player pulled off some eye-catching shots but could not match the skill or consistency of Peter. 6-2 6-0.

Two chances to seal the semi-final spot slipped by, as Simon Barker and

then Simon Edmond lost out in lengthy singles matches to father and son Simon and Robert Shenkman. So it was all down to our own father and son, David and James Watson. From the off, the result was in no doubt, as they outplayed young rackets player Alex Dunccliffe-Vines and not-so-young Jamie Bebb. It was over, 6-1 6-1, in no time at all.

Semi-final

Cambridge, last season's runners-up, were the semi-final opponents. With David Watson away and Peter Wright available only for doubles duty after a gruelling National League evening the night before, skipper Dunn was required to tinker.

The visitors had tinkered too, sending out their top player, Ed Kay (an RTC member himself, of course), in the No 2 doubles. Despite playing with a (talented) novice in Matt Shaw, Ed was able to impose himself on the match and proved too much for an out-of-sorts Phil Dunn and James Sohl.

It was imperative that Nick Hatchett win the No 3 singles against Cambridge captain Jules Camp. That was never in doubt, as Nick used his railroad and volleying to charge through a 6-0 first set and hold off a challenge in the second to close it out 6-2. Ruthless.

James Watson's opponent, Jamie Giddins, had had a recent run of eye-catching wins, and it was soon easy to see why. He chased everything down

and employed his rackets skills to great effect, and he came up with the goods on the crucial points to restore Cambridge's advantage 6-3 6-4.

A 2-1 deficit doesn't worry you much when you have Peter Wright to come, though. Aided by an inspired Simon Barker, Peter controlled the top doubles rubber, and their 6-0 6-1 win set up another decider.

Tom Freeman, back from injury, was up against Alex Evans, and a tight first set reflected the tension in both players and spectators. Tom had enough to take it 6-3, and he was narrowly ahead when Alex turned an ankle while stretching for a low ball. He carried on and bravely won a couple more games, but Tom soon coolly closed the set and match out to book RTC's final place.

In that final, the visitors will not be MCC or Queen's, as both fell victim on home turf to Seacourt. The spirited islanders are sure to bring a vocal following, so anyone who fancies coming along to cheer on the home side (from 10am) would be most welcome. RTC has not won this title since 2004, so success is overdue...

☛ Peter Wright found Jamie Douglas too hot to handle in the semi-finals of the Amateur Championships at Queen's, won by Conor Medlow. In the doubles, Conor paired up with Luke Danby to defeat Peter and Jamie in the final, while David Watson and James Sohl reached the semi-finals.

SUMMER REAL TENNIS

Where to play while the court is closed

The board is grateful to the following clubs, who have kindly made allowances for RTC members during the closure:

☛ **Holyport** is happy to welcome RTC members during the summer months and will waive any visitor's fee for anyone who is also a member of the Tennis & Rackets Association. (If you're not a T&RA member and might want to join, talk to the professionals or visit www.tennisandrackets.com/general-join.aspx.)

tel: 01628 673964

email: pros@hrtc.co.uk

web: www.hrtc.co.uk

☛ **Petworth House** will welcome all RTC members during the closure period.

tel: 01798 343527

email: phtc@btconnect.com

web: www.petworthrealtennis.com

☛ Also, there will be a **USA tour** in August. If you might like to be involved, please contact Nick Wood as soon as possible. The trip will run roughly from Saturday 8 to Monday 17 August and will take in Chicago, Boston and Newport, culminating in the Pell Cup (13-16 August), a doubles tournament open to players of many levels.

☛ **Other trips/matches** There will be more social matches and/or mini-tours. Keep an eye out for details.

Over the top Down Under

Chris Chapman and Harriet Ingham both reached new heights in the Australian Open

January's Australian Open saw two of RTC's rising talents enjoy pleasing breakthroughs. While senior professional Chris Chapman reached his first major final on his return to Melbourne, Harriet Ingham chalked up her first Open victory, coming through the challenge of a long and tense final with flying colours.

Both Chris and Harriet would have had high hopes after seeing the draws. In the men's event world No 1 Camden Riviere was there, seeking his first Australian Open title and a 'Tiger slam' (ie holding all four major titles at once, though not won in the same year), but only one more of the eight players ranked above Chris was in the draw. This was Chris's friend and rival Kieran Booth, the world's top amateur, and the two duly met in the semi-finals.

In their previous tussles, Kieran has shown a fondness for hard hitting, but this time he chose a more measured approach. The result was a cagey match with long rallies, and the momentum swung each way up to 5-5 in the first set. Kieran took it and then went 3-0 up in the second. But Chris is never disheartened, and he settled down, spending more time at the service end where he could control matters. He turned the set around to win it 6-4, and although Kieran fought back in the third to level it at 5-5, this time Chris won the decisive game to move 2-1 up in sets. The fourth was (unsurprisingly) tight, but Chris had the edge all the way through and closed out the match 6-4.

Then there was the small matter of Camden Riviere in the final two days later – but Chris had to wait a while longer thanks to a long ladies' final...



Prue McCahey and Harriet Ingham

Ladies' final

The ladies' event was sadly missing the world's top few players, meaning Harriet flew out as the No 1 seed. When she reached the French Open semi-finals in the autumn it all seemed like part of a natural learning curve, with no expectations – but now here she was, suddenly expected to win a tournament by beating vastly more experienced players on their home court. What could possibly go wrong?

Certainly nothing went wrong for Harriet in her semi-final, which was a 6-0 6-0 cruise. Her opponent in the final was a former champion, Prue McCahey, who had enjoyed a similarly one-sided semi-final and would obviously provide stiffer opposition. Indeed, Harriet fell 1-3 down early on before settling into a rhythm and striking the ball sweetly to take the first set 6-4. Prue was quick to punish when Harriet's serves drifted long, however, plugging away with returns into the backhand corner. 3-3 in the second became 6-3 to Prue, and in the deciding set she earned a 3-0 lead. Harriet was in trouble.

Wisely, she changed serving tactics, employing a drag that restricted Prue's options. The match turned on its head,

and from 0-3 Harriet found herself 5-4 and 30-0 up, defending two chases. A neat forehand and then a crisp volley later, she had completed the comeback and become Australian Open champion – the first, we hope, of many titles.

Men's final

How do you beat Camden Riviere? Well, Chris had a close-up view of how Rob Fahey managed it in his world title defence last year, but it was still a daunting task. He came out attacking (as he had to), looking to neutralise the American's famous mobility by hitting galleries and winning openings.

Camden was control throughout, however. Chris had a hot spell in the third set, but Camden rode the mini-storm well on his way to a 6-1 6-2 6-2 success. Still, a very successful event for Chris, and a climb up the rankings.

US Open

A month later, Chris flew into snowbound, sub-zero Boston, where several players kept their woolly hats on during play. After negotiating some tricky moments in his first match, against an inspired Claire Fahey, Chris faced the 'other' Fahey in his quarter-final. The two had just played out the tightest of matches at Holyport, and when the first set went to 5-5 it was heading that way again. Then, at set point down, Chris charged across court to try to get to a low ball and his head met the side wall. Although his tournament was over, a hospital scan thankfully revealed no lasting damage.

Needless to say, the title went to Camden Riviere again, after a four-set win over the world champion.

• NEWS IN BRIEF • NEWS IN BRIEF • NEWS IN BRIEF •

Fathers & Sons

Having previously enjoyed Fathers & Sons Championship success with No 1 son James, David Watson this time won at Leamington with Oliver, beating Ed and Ben Boddington 8-4.

Club competitions

David Watson has also reached the final of the **Seal Salver**. He will take on Richard Moore. In the **Barker Camm Cup**, David Stephens beat Martin Daly in the Grade D final, while John Leach and Fred Satow reached the Grade C final. In the **Lathom Browne Cup**, Katy Doy is up against a familiar face in the Grade H final – her husband Giles!

Varsity matches

RTC members enjoyed mixed fortunes in the Varsity matches. Ed Kay helped Cambridge's men to a 6-0 victory, and while the ladies' match was closer, Oxford and Maggie Henderson-Tew ended up falling just short, as Cambridge won 4-2.

British Ladies' Masters

Elvira Campione reached the semi-finals of the Ladies' Masters at Holyport, won by Penny Lumley (who crushed Alex Garside 6-0 6-0 in the final). There was success for RTC's Linda Sheraton-Davis in the plate handicap doubles, which she won with Sarah Brownlee.

The sport of kids

Youngsters again dominated the Chetwood Trophy

The winners and runners up of the UK clubs' various handicap singles competitions congregated at the Royal Tennis Court in January to battle it out for the Chetwood Trophy. Representing RTC were Lathom Browne winner Fred Satow and runner-up Karen Prottey, but unfortunately both fell at the group stage. We also welcomed RTC member Patrick Jenkins, representing Holypport having won their handicap competition.

Early promise was shown by several players, including Radley's Vincent Graham and Prested Hall's hot-shot juniors Tom Lucey and Zak Ramjane.

The pick of the semi-finals was a rematch of Prested's own final, as Tom and Zak met once again. Zak, with enough competition experience under his belt despite his tender years, was able to tame the up-and-coming Tom, controlling the game throughout and serving the best young railroad this spectator had seen for a while.

In the final Zak was up against 2013 Chetwood Trophy winner Henry Mullan of Bristol. Henry, playing off 13, had to give away 40 points and belied



Winner Zak Ramjane and Henry Mullan with a star-struck Nick Wood

his teenage years by executing a game-plan very well at the start. But as the match wore on Zak grew in confidence and drew errors from Henry. In the end Zak came home 8-3, a worthy winner of this excellent tournament.

I encourage members to come and watch the Chetwood Trophy in future. It's a tournament the RTC Board are delighted to support each year, and it is a wonderful advert for both handicap tennis and the camaraderie and rivalry of inter-club competition, and on this occasion it also showcased the wonderful rise of several excellent junior prospects.

Owen Saunders

RTC junior tournaments

At the Under-25s tournament weekend in January, Ed Kay performed brilliantly, winning all three competitions: the level singles (Chairman's Cup), handicap singles (Wollaston Cup) and level doubles (Vaughan Trophy). This was the second year in a row that Ed had taken all three titles.

With Alex Rozier-Pamplin out of the singles events due to injury, Ed serenely progressed, beating Peter Mather in the semi and then Harriet Ingham in the final, for the loss of just one game in each match. In the level doubles, Ed and Alex beat Peter and Harriet 6-1 6-1.

In the less predictable handicap singles, the surprise package was Oli Stewart, who improved with every game. In the semis, Alice O'Hagan was Ed's next victim despite a 50-point handicap difference, while Oli beat Isabel Candy. In the final Ed again coped with a 50-point difference, winning through 6-3.

The weekend was a wonderful advert for the range of talent there is in the Under 25s. With on court etiquette that would put many a longer-toothed member to shame, everyone gave it their best shot but agreed that Ed was just too good.

GRAHAM ASTON (1938-2015)

I met Graham very soon after he started to play at the RTC in 2002. He was affable, friendly and modest. Over the next few years we became good friends. Bit by bit I discovered a remarkable man lay beneath his retiring exterior. Graham was a giver of a proportion that I had never come across before, with fingers in many pies – not fingers, in fact, he was up to his elbows in any activity that he put his mind to.

As a sportsman he was remarkable, not because he was extremely good at any one game, but because his dance card was marked weeks ahead: lawn tennis at St George's Hill LTC (where he also played squash) and real tennis. Sometimes he would play up to ten matches a week. Indeed, up to a few years ago he also organised Wednesday evening badminton.

Many members will know of Graham through his charity shipments to Paraguay. This also revealed a funny contradiction in him. He was parsimonious to the utmost when it came to dishing out measly tips to waiters. And he was most upset when a lady he was taking on a first date asked for a gin and tonic. "On a first date!" he said in a horrified tone. However, although we all contributed to the containers that went to Paraguay, it was Graham who paid

the charges and bribes to the officials to ensure the goods got to the intended recipients. When his wife died of cancer, Graham set up a school in her name in Uruguay and this too was financed from his own pocket.

In Weybridge he was involved in the boy scout troop, and also the local Methodist church, where he would arrange an annual concert by the British Airways brass band, the money raised shared between the church and the school in Uruguay.

When I was RTC social secretary I asked Graham to do his roast lamb speciality for our barbecue. He arrived at the club at noon, dug up the turf, laid down the charcoal, put his own bricks and racks up and roasted seven sides of lamb over the next five hours. All who turned up declared it the best lamb they had tasted. When the eating was over, Graham carried his bricks and grills to his car, doused the fire and replaced the turf. He had worked 11 hours nonstop. He did this with good humour and never expected praise. And he wasn't even a full member!

Graham was a giver of both his time and his energy. He made the world a better place and more importantly he made us all want to be better people. In fact, to be more like Graham.

Martin Bronstein

National League

Chris Chapman has led by example for RTC

Since the last newsletter, the Premier Division duo have had a busy time of it. After their narrow opening loss to Leamington, they easily saw off a depleted Queen's team before heading to Petworth for their first away match. Chris Chapman couldn't take down world No 4 Bryn Sayers, but Peter Wright won his singles and RTC sneaked the doubles 8-7 to gain a crucial away win.

The return match in January offered further evidence of Chris's progress in recent months. After Peter had beaten Tom Durack, Chris set about taking Bryn apart and even had a match point at 6-2, 5-1. Bryn chose that moment to show some steel, though, and he pulled the set back to 5-5 before Chris finally finished him off. Another 8-7 doubles win completed a perfect night.

Next came a trip to Holyport to take on the dynamic duo of Fahey and Fahey. Peter had two long, tight sets with Claire, but on both occasions he just had enough, winning 6-5 6-4. Then Chris had a titanic battle with Rob, just missing out in the tightest of first sets, levelling the match in the second and eventually succumbing 6-3 in the third. An overall victory still looked on the cards at 6-1 in the doubles – but world champions don't just roll over and die, and the home pair fought back to take it 8-7 and retain their unbeaten record.

All this leaves Holyport clear at the top, with RTC well placed to hold on to second place. They travel to Leamington and Queen's before welcoming Holyport to the Palace on Saturday 28 March.

Division 2 (10 hcp +)

David Watson has had a stellar season, winning 10 of his 12 matches (many against players with better handicaps) and leading the division's 'MVP' race. With James Sohl forming a strong doubles partnership with David, RTC sit atop the table, although a strong Cambridge outfit (featuring RTC member Ed Kay as its star player) do have games in hand.

Division 3 (15 hcp +)

Since an opening defeat at Moreton Morrell, our defending champions have stamped their authority on this division in some style. Their most recent result

was a ruthless destruction of that Moreton Morrell team, and RTC (Nick Hatchett, Phil Dunn and Simon Barker) look well set to top the table.

Division 4

RTC have struggled in this division, particularly on the road, despite some fine wins along the way for Stephen Goss. However, a recent win at Hatfield offers some hope, with just three home fixtures remaining.

Division 5

David Blizzard's team are in the thick of a tight tussle for positions in the top three, and home advantage in the playoffs is likely to be crucial. One drawback is that they don't get to play MCC again, having won 12 sets out of 12 against them.

Division 6

After a disastrous start to the season, Paul Wright's team have given themselves a glimmer of hope with two home matches remaining. They may well need two 3-0 victories to reach the playoffs. It looks like the route to this title will include a tough away final at Prested Hall.

Division 7

Dick Cowling's outfit have work to do in order to reach the playoffs, despite Matt Webb's unbeaten record. This is one of the tightest divisions, and anything could happen, but they are more than capable of beating the teams they need to.

Division 8

Peter Mather has settled nicely into the captain's role, and with Harriet Ingham available and Justin Gregory unbeaten the RTC team look formidable and are improving by the week. If they don't finish the season on top of the pile, it will be a big surprise.

Division 9

RTC currently sit in the final playoff place but are there to be shot at, having played two more matches than the teams below them. Wins in their last two matches *might* just be enough to protect that top-three place. John Leach has been the stand-out RTC performer, with three wins out of three.

NATIONAL LEAGUE TABLES

PREMIER DIVISION

Holyport	5	5	35
RTC1	5	3	28
Leamington	6	3	27
Petworth	6	2	17
Queen's	4	0	4

DIVISION 2

RTC2	6	4	30
Cambridge	4	3	21
Seacourt	3	2	17
MCC	4	2	17
Petworth	4	0	9

DIVISION 3

Moreton Morrell	6	5	31
RTC3	5	4	29
Cambridge	4	1	17
Paris	4	2	16
Prested Hall	5	0	10

DIVISION 4

MCC	5	4	31
Oxford	6	3	28
Hatfield	5	2	20
Radley	5	3	19
RTC4	5	1	13

DIVISION 5

Hatfield	5	4	29
RTC5	5	3	24
Cambridge	5	2	22
Canford	3	2	12
MCC	6	1	9

DIVISION 6

Prested Hall	7	6	42
Petworth	6	4	34
Oxford	6	4	30
Hatfield	6	3	28
RTC6	6	3	23
Canford	8	0	0

DIVISION 7

Middlesex U	6	4	32
Leamington	5	3	28
Cambridge	6	4	25
RTC7	5	2	21
MCC	6	1	19

DIVISION 8

Moreton Morrell	8	5	38
RTC8	6	5	37
Oxford	6	3	27
Seacourt	7	1	20
Petworth	5	2	21

DIVISION 9

Oxford	6	5	35
Holyport	6	3	28
RTC9	6	1	21
Canford	4	2	18
Leamington	4	1	13

Less pain, more gain, please

Nick Wood looks forward to the day when our professionals are all fit and firing

The rocky road that is Chris Chapman! Those who have been following Chris's progress in training and tournament play have witnessed a transformation; a blossoming is under way. Yet he has been plagued by unfortunate mishaps.

Through very hard and dedicated work, Chris has stepped into the limelight of big-stage real tennis. The 2014 British Open was the watershed: Chris outclassed and outplayed the naturally talented Tim Chisholm and then nearly took out Steve Virgona in straight sets in the next round. Even more recently, he only narrowly lost in the third set to world champion Rob Fahey in the IRTPA National League at Holyport.

So why the rocky road? Not only was Chris plagued with a bad hamstring injury in the 2011 French Open; not only was he most unfortunate to dislocate his shoulder in the 2013 British Open (on both occasions requiring him to withdraw); he returned from the US Open in Boston having had to withdraw due to an awful fall in which he crashed his head against the wall, requiring him to go to hospital.

Each time he has recovered, trained harder and come back stronger – and I have no doubt it will be the same again this time. This shows the measure of the man, and RTC should be very proud to have such a determined young man performing so well.

When it rains...

When it comes to injuries, at this moment the RTC professionals are drenched! No, Lesley is fine – she has already had her fair share. Josh is the latest casualty, having badly damaged his ankle back in May 2014.

He has recently had an operation (which he watched as it took place!) and is now venturing back on court for very gentle practice sessions. Throughout this untimely injury, Josh has demonstrated great maturity and discipline – never complaining, just proactively going about resolving the situation as best he could.

Now, almost 12 months later, he is ready to get back to business – not that he hasn't been working on his game in the meantime. In fact, he says the time out has allowed him to reflect on how he wants to progress his game, time to create a clear picture and plan. Without this, he might well just been practising and playing hard without a real vision of success.

Then there's the boss

Some say I've had a long list of injuries, but I consider myself quite fortunate given the tough schedule that was my playing career. It has been over two years now that I have been off sport with an ankle injury, battling with the NHS to arrange an operation. Now there is light at the end of the corridor, and all the competitive urges are beginning to return.

September 2015, here I come!

Come September, all the RTC pros should be back to full physical fitness. Back to fine fettle, striving to achieve great things. Where there is determination, effort and a dream, there is also a risk element to overcome; injuries are always waiting around the corner. When you're pushing hard, injuries are part and parcel of succeeding in sport.

As mentioned, Lesley is the only fit one among us at the moment. She continues to be helpful and enthusiastic not only at RTC but also at Holyport, which has turned the corner and is now heading to great things. Her enthusiasm and energy are an inspiration to all.

At this point, I would like to thank the RTC Professional Development Fund* for supporting the development and training of the professionals, particularly Chris and now Josh.

Also, I'd like to thank the RTC Board. If all goes to plan, the club will soon have in place medical cover to assist the pros with any future injuries.

Although this article is very much about playing real tennis and the risks associated, you can be assured that your professionals, along with developing their game, also pride themselves in providing a service to members that is unmatched around the world.

** If you would like to be involved in assisting the development of the professionals, please contact John Clark*

Ladies' World Championship

For the first time since 2007, the Ladies' World Championship will be held in the UK, at Leamington in April. Normally a look ahead to a world title battle would assess the potential victors – but in the era of Claire Fahey there seems little point in such speculation.

Claire can already be hailed as the greatest player the ladies' game has produced. While she must wait a few years to pass Penny Lumley's six world titles, her lowest handicap of 2.4 (she is currently 4.3) is streets ahead of the previous best (Charlotte Cornwallis's 8.9). She has also beaten men at the British and US Opens.

The second seed is likely to be the 2013 runner-up, Claire's sister Sarah Vigrass, while among those jostling for semi-final berths will be RTC's improving Australian Open champion Harriet Ingham and Nicola Doble. Harriet's blossoming is a welcome boost for the women's game, but she is not alone – Irina Dulbish of Middlesex University/MCC and Tara Lumley of Holyport also offer hope of an emerging youthful power base.

As well as the singles and doubles championships (the Vigrass sisters are champions), there will be a singles plate competition and a handicap doubles open to all levels of player.

Social matches

Successful away matches were held against Manchester and Cambridge. In the away fixture against Manchester, Owen Saunders, Richard East, Stephen Goss and Ron Slade were joined by Manchester-based RTC members David and Heather Fowler. The match ended 3-3, and as no rules had been laid down for what to do in the event of a draw, the matter was debated over a fine dinner, then in a dimly lit backstreet pub, and then in the hotel bar until no one could recall what the debate was about.

Much thanks to match managers Keith Beechener (CURTC) and Bob Howe (MRTC), both fantastic hosts.

Mixed fortunes

A healthy RTC contingent ventured to Hatfield for an assault on the Billy Ross Skinner mixed doubles

The Billy Ross Skinner, an invitational mixed doubles event that was played at the Royal Tennis Court from 1983 until 1999 and has since taken place at Hatfield House, has been a productive competition for RTC members over the years, with recent victors including James Watson, Karen Hird and Elvira Campione.

Hopes were high, then, for our sizeable contingent this year. When the dust had settled on the group stage and six of the eight quarter-final pairings featured RTC players, things looked even better. Alas, it was time for us to start knocking each other out, and Sue Haswell (playing with Cambridge's David Pimblett) was the first executioner, eliminating Simon Edmond and Radley/RTC's Maggie Henderson-Tew.

Next, Elvira and her unorthodox but effective partner, Julian Stafford of Cambridge, were up against the duo everyone was tipping for the title: our own Nicola Doble and the improving Jamie Bingham of Holyport. Despite tense moments in a second set notable for some trademark Campione volleys (amid mutters of "Don't keep feeding her volley!" in the dedans), the favourites advanced.

The next intra-RTC battle saw Helen-Frances Pilkington (with Anthony Jenks of Queen's) take on Owen Saunders and Seacourt's Alex Garside (who is also an RTC member). Two one-sided sets went each way, and the decider went all the way to a 40-all climax at

5-5. As Owen struck a ball from the backhand corner, Anthony had advanced well into the Hazard zone and met Owen's shot with a crisp volley to better than a yard. It was to prove a match-winning shot, and a fitting end to the quarter-finals.

The only non-RTC quarter-final had also gone to 5-5 and 40 all, with Oxford's Freddy Adam and MCC's Nick Abelson coming from behind to sneak through. In the first semi-final, they shared sets with Haswell/Pimblett before Freddy upped her level, aided by some sharp volleying by her partner, and took control of the third set to seal a final place.

Could Pilkington/Jenks stop the Doble/Bingham juggernaut? The answer was a resounding no, as the favourites dropped only three games in two sets. Surely the RTC/Holyport pair – fairly balanced in playing level, with a useful left-hand/right-hand split – would prevail in the final now, having not yet dropped a single set...

It certainly looked that way at first – but after a 6-2 opening set Adam/Abelson staged a biblical fightback, taking the second 6-2 and the third 6-4 to upset the odds.

The number of close matches reflects the successful allocation of partners by the organisers, and the keenly competitive tennis was made all the more enjoyable by the efforts of the Hatfield professionals and members, who always make it one of the most welcoming clubs to visit.

RESULTS

Barker Camm Cup

Grade D, semi-finals: David Stephens beat Julian Sheraton-Davis 6-4 6-1; Martin Daly beat Tom Candy 4-6 6-1 6-3. **Final:** Stephens beat Daly 6-3 6-3. **Grade C, semi-finals:** Fred Satow beat Nicola Doble 6-3 3-6 6-3; John Leach beat David Stephens 6-5 6-4.

Seal Salver

Semi-finals: David Watson beat John East 9-7; Richard Moore beat Simon Barker 9-5.

Pol Roger Trophy

Quarter-final: RTC beat Manchester 3-2 Phil Dunn & Nick Hatchett beat Adam Holloway & Mark Seymour Mead 6-3 6-1; Peter Wright beat Richard Owen 6-2 6-0; Simon Barker lost to Simon Shenkman 4-6 3-6; Simon Edmond lost to Robert Shenkman 3-6 3-6; David & James Watson bt Alex Dunccliffe-Vines & Jamie Bebb 6-1 6-1.

Semi-final: RTC beat Cambridge 3-2

Dunn & James Sohl lost to Ed Kay & Matt Shaw 1-6 5-6; Hatchett beat Jules Camp 6-0 6-2; James Watson lost to Jamie Giddins 3-6 4-6; Wright & Barker beat Andrew Petrie & Duncan Colquhoun 6-0 6-1; Tom Freeman beat Alex Evans 6-3 6-4.

Chetwood Trophy

Semi-finals: Zak Ramjane beat Tom Lucey 6-3; Henry Mullan beat Vincent Graham 6-1. **Final:** Ramjane beat Mullan 8-3.

British Ladies' Masters (Holyport)

Semi-finals: Penny Lumley beat Elvira Campione 6-1 6-2; Alex Garside beat Jill Newby 6-1 6-0. **Ladies' final:** Lumley beat Garside 6-0 6-0.

Australian Open (Melbourne)

Men's semi-finals: Camden Riviere beat Nick Howell 6-2 6-2 6-4; Chris Chapman beat Kieran Booth 5-6 6-4 6-5 6-4. **Final:** Riviere beat Chapman 6-1 6-2 6-2. **Ladies' final:** Harriet Ingham beat Prue McCahey 6-4 3-6 6-4.

US Open (Boston)

Semi-finals: Camden Riviere beat Steve Virgona 6-0 6-3 6-3; Rob Fahey beat Tim Chisholm 3-6 6-3 6-5 1-6 6-4. **Final:** Riviere beat Fahey 6-0 6-1 4-6 6-3.

RTC Top Ten

Singles handicaps
February 2015

1	Peter Wright	0.9
2	Ed Kay	8.1
3	Charlie Crossley	8.9
4	Nick Hatchett	12.0
5	David Watson	12.2
6	Tom Freeman	13.4
7	Phil Dunn	14.8
8	James Watson	15.3
9	Simon Barker	17.9
10	James Sohl	18.1

World Race Points

1	Camden Riviere	722
2	Rob Fahey	482
3	Steve Virgona	286
4	Tim Chisholm	131
5	Bryn Sayers	119
6	Kieran Booth	108
7	Ben Matthews	100
8	Chris Chapman	98

The top four in the list (excluding Fahey) after November's British Open will compete to challenge Fahey for the world title in 2016

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 next issue, either via the professionals or by email at the address below.

Photographs from competitions and events are always most welcome.

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