

THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT



Picture: Clare Buckingham

A brighter future

As normality nears, your club needs your help

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A Royal visit

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Fixtures list and social focus—see pages 4 and 5

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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

What a pleasure it is finally to be back on court and playing regularly. Since April, we have gradually resumed activities and now there is a semblance of normality – singles, doubles, reasonably unrestricted access to the Club rooms, and with the promise of some competitive tennis and social events to come in the next couple of months. We had hoped to remove all restrictions by the end of June but the Prime Minister's announcement (last evening, as I write) of a four-week delay means that we will have to wait until 19th July before we can return to hourly courts.

It was very good to see some 40 members at the pre-AGM online forum in May – thank you for your positive engagement and constructive debate. The Board continues to juggle and balance the Club's finances through this turbulent period. The headline remains that we have survived more or less unscathed, thanks to the continuing support of your subscriptions, the Government furlough scheme and rigorous cost control.

However, the medium and longer term is of greater concern. During the last 18 months we have lost a net 43 full members. In normal times, about ten full members leave each year and we recruit a similar number. Unsurprisingly, the pandemic has caused more people to review their personal situations and we have had no opportunity to seek new members. Financially, this will equate to an annual deficit of about £18k, assuming that all other income and costs remain unchanged. You will appreciate that this is not a sustainable position.

The Board, led in this matter by Nicola Doble, has taken a long hard look at how we should respond. Our target is to

recruit 20 new full playing members. Ideally, we would prefer to recruit at under the average age of our whole membership (which is 55) and to find people who will want to be active and commit to playing and improving at the Club in the long term. We're always conscious of and keen to diversify our membership further – in term of gender, age and ethnicity – if possible.

Our strategy will have a number of strands but, crucially, it looks for your help:

Do you have friends or acquaintances who might enjoy taking up the game? Please consider inviting them along for a taster or social session.

Do you play other sports (lawn tennis, squash, cricket etc) at clubs locally? How about setting up an evening playing event at RTC.

Do you have some time, energy and marketing skills to offer? Nicola would love to have two or three willing member volunteers to assist in the push to find our 20 new members.

We're also looking to recruit social members, so if you know someone who might enjoy that side of RTC, bring them along to one of our events over the next few months.

Most of all, I encourage everyone to get back playing and rediscover the joys of the game. Since reopening in April, 144 of you have been on court at least once. But that also means that 100 of you have yet to dust off your racket and remember what fine players you used to be! So, pick up that phone, e-mail the Pros and get your name on the booking sheet.

Michael Day CVO



Get out in the gardens

The Club Gardens all form part of your club and your enjoyment.

RTC has managed, maintained and in some instances, improved the two club gardens. Often overlooked, they offer a wonderful and tranquil space to relax after a game, or to even enjoy an impromptu BBQ.

Over the years both the front Wilderness Garden and the large Club Garden have gradually become overgrown and unkempt. In an attempt to curb the ever-growing needs of a garden, your Head Pro has turned his hands into a green fingered amateur - I'd say ranking in the 70-handicap range - enjoying the upkeep and in a small way enhancing the club facilities.

The Wilderness Garden is a new landscaped retreat. The

tree line has been cut back, bringing more light, and the ground-covering ivy has been cut back to reclaim the lawn which has been reseeded and turfed in some areas. The shrubs in the beds have been cut back to create more space for growth. And a new seating area has been cleared, revealing a long-forgotten stone wall.

Meanwhile in the Club Garden, a long-term task to improve the quality of the lawn is under way. The orchard / wild flower area is currently being tidied and re-established, while the perimeter pathway also has seen the overgrown tree line cut back to allow use without the need for a limbo dance.

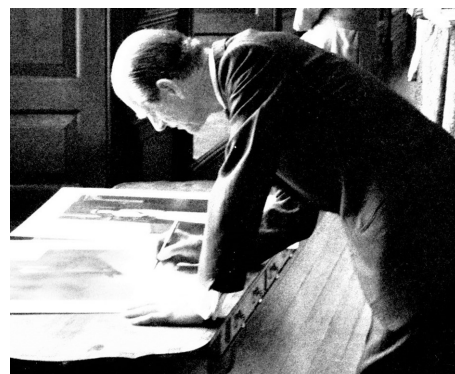
Please, when the weather permits, take your after-match drink into the gardens and enjoy the wonderful surroundings that are all part of your membership.

When Royalty graced our court

*The Royal Tennis Court joined the rest of the country in mourning the death of His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, husband of Her Majesty The Queen, our patron. The court was closed on the day of the funeral, Saturday 17th April. Here **Murray Glover**, RTC's longest-serving member, remembers a Royal visit to our tennis court in 1980 to celebrate the club's 450th anniversary.*

RTC members may not have seen these pictures taken of The Prince Philip when he accompanied The Queen to the Royal Tennis Court in 1980. I was asked to co-ordinate the Press presence at the event, and, at the same time, to take some photographs myself, using the far less capable pre-digital cameras of the time. (You may also have seen some of my other photos eg of world champ Etchebaster, Ronaldson and Fahey, hanging in various club rooms.)

The Royal couple met invited RTC and T&RA guests outside the court, signed



Left, Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, outside the tennis court, above, Prince Philip signs his portrait, below, Her Majesty The Queen views tennis portraits. Photos: Murray

the large official photos of themselves, were shown various tennis portraits, watched an exhibition doubles match, and met tennis Professionals on the court afterwards.

It is good to see the Newsletter remains in fine form. I joined RTC in April 1958 when the annual RTC subscription was £1, which even a penniless undergraduate could afford! When I was Newsletter editor, as well as Hon. Sec. in the early '70s, the quarterly Newsletter was merely foolscap sheets stapled together, illegally typed by my secretary, and produced on machinery at the company I worked for. I had to take them home, get my children to help me hand address 800 envelopes, insert them in envelopes, stick gummed stamps on them, and finally lug them to a post office.

It is wonderful to see not only RTC but the whole game worldwide in such a flourishing state. Well done to all at RTC and best wishes for a hopefully less restricted future.



Junior Development

Both our Junior Development Officer (JDO), Sarah Parsons, and Professional in charge of junior development, Josh Smith, have been busy developing the coaching programme for the RTC juniors.

An Elite Squad has been created with training camps to accommodate them. The first training camp took place over the recent half term break and proved highly successful. A consolidated coaching session of three hours provided time for extensive work on game development and a great opportunity for camaraderie and friendship-building. Rather than weekly one-hour sessions, these training camps will take place six to eight times per year.

The RTC is all about developing junior play, introducing new juniors to the game of Real Tennis by providing quality court time as well as a welcoming and enjoyable place to 'hang out'. If you know of anyone who might be interested, do put them in touch with the Professionals.

Lockers for hire

After many years of gathering dust, the fabulous wall of locker drawers in the gentlemen's changing room has been recommissioned and is now available for the storage of personal tennis-related items. Of the 36 lockers, 22 are now available for hire at £100 each per year. To express your interest in a locker please e-mail nick.wood@royaltenniscourt.com

Although located in the gentlemen's changing room, these lockers are available to women also - we just ask that consideration is given when requiring access!

With the funds raised we hope to renovate the further locker drawers and invest in other improvements to our facilities. We owe a great deal of thanks to RTC member Tony Cooke who personally, painstakingly, and skilfully hand-crafted new keys to fit the original locks.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Here's the fixture list for the 2021/22 season. For more information on any of these events, contact the Pro team. Tournament entry forms will come out shortly. We've also included dates for selected national events and tournaments that RTC members often compete and attend.

(Check the T&RA website for more information.) More events will be confirmed soon. Keep up to date with all the events on our online calendar. Head to bit.ly/RTCCalendar and save it as a favourite!

Giles Doy

Date	Event	Description
4th & 5th SEPTEMBER	De Laszlo Bowl	Level doubles, with highest and lowest handicaps paired together
4th	Season opening Barbecue	Welcome event barbecue in the club garden
9th (to 27th November)	Autumn Night Pennant	Round robin team tournament played on Thursday nights
18th	Queens vs Hamsters club match	Hamsters match at Queen's Club
19th	<i>"Not the Varsity Match" (Oxford v Cambridge)</i>	<i>(At Cambridge)</i>
23rd-26th	RTC Tennis Development Tournament	Development tournament for top UK real tennis players
25th	RTC Ladies v RTC Gentlemen	Sociable team event of handicap singles and doubles
4th-11th OCTOBER	<i>IRTPA Professional Singles Championship</i>	<i>(At Wellington College)</i>
9th & 10th	Barker Camm G Grade	Level singles, handicaps 75+
21st	Hamsters v Dedanists club match	Hamsters match against Dedanists, at RTC
30th & 31st	Harris Watson Group Stages	Level doubles, seeded based on handicap
5th-7th NOVEMBER	<i>British Ladies Handicap Singles and Doubles</i>	<i>(At Prested Hall)</i>
6th	Hardwick v Hamsters club match	Hamsters match at Hardwick House
12th	Prizegiving ceremony	Awarding of prizes for the last tournament season
13th & 14th	Pol Roger & Brodie Cup Preliminary Rounds	National team competition for handicaps <45
14th-23rd	<i>British Open Singles & Doubles Championship</i>	<i>(At Queen's Club)</i>
20th & 21st	Barker Camm F Grade	Level Singles, handicap 65-75
25th (to 26th February)	Winter Night Pennant	Round robin team tournament played on Thursday nights
26th-28th	<i>Leamington Open Handicap Doubles</i>	<i>(At Leamington)</i>
4th & 5th DECEMBER	Pol Roger & Brodie Cup Quarter Finals	National team competition for handicaps <45
11th & 12th	Barker Camm E Grade	Level Singles, handicaps 55-65
14th	Carol Service	Carol Service for RTC members and guests in the Hampton Court Chapel Royal

We are looking forward to getting RTC's social calendar up and running in even stronger form than we enjoyed prior to the disruption of the last year.

First, we will be launching the new season and celebrating reopening with a garden party and BBQ on Saturday 4th September. This coincides with our first tournament of the new season - the De Laszlo Bowl - and should be a great opportunity for socialising and catching up on and off court. We will also be belatedly celebrating the arrival of Scott Blaber and family at RTC – do join us to applaud all that Scott has brought to the club already.

The brilliant team at Miss Polly Cafe will be stoking up the BBQ and a cash bar will be available with a range of alcoholic and soft drinks. Adult tickets are £35 and Under-12 tickets are available for £15. Contact the Professionals for tickets. Places are limited so don't delay!

We can't wait to finally be able to gather for the prizegiving for the 2019-2020 season. Winners and finalists will be contacted with specific invitations. All

members are very welcome to join us to celebrate the successes of this rather protracted season. Save the date: evening of Friday 12th November 2021.

Looking further ahead, the RTC Carol Service is planned for 7.30pm on Tuesday 14th December 2021. We are thrilled to be able to get this event back in the calendar - we know it's a tradition enjoyed by many members and their families in the run-up to Christmas.

We are using the feedback from the Members' Survey to review our calendar of events and consider what else we can offer. Planning is under way to make sure RTC's social scene is buzzing once more throughout 2022. We are always open to new ideas about events to enhance our social offer!

All social events at RTC rely on the goodwill and willing efforts of volunteers, for which we are enormously grateful. If you would be able to help at an event or if you would like to take the lead on adding another event to the calendar (e.g. informal Christmas drinks, summer picnic, beat the Pro), please e-mail social@royaltenniscourt.com.
Katy Doy

18th	Hamsters v Hatfield House club match	Hamsters match against Hatfield, at RTC
8th JANUARY 2022	Hardwick Haphazards club match	Club match against Hardwick House, open to all
8th	Wellington v Hamsters club match	Hamsters match at Wellington
15th & 16th	Barker Camm D Grade	Level Singles, handicaps 45-55
22nd & 23rd	Pol Roger & Brodie Cup Semi Finals	National team competition for handicaps <45
28th-30th	<i>Leamington Open Handicap Singles</i>	<i>(At Leamington/Moreton Morrell)</i>
5th & 6th FEBRUARY	Under 25's Tournament weekend	Club competitions for RTC members aged under 25
5th & 6th	Leamington & Moreton Morrell v Hamsters weekend	Hamsters match at Leamington and Moreton Morell
24th (to 21st May)	Spring Night Pennant	Round robin team tournament on Thursday nights
26th & 27th	Barker Camm C Grade	Level Singles, handicaps 35-45
5th & 6th MARCH	Pol Roger & Brodie Cup Final	National team competition for handicaps <45
5th & 6th	Bristol v RTC club match	A two-day match in Bristol, open to all handicaps
12th	MCC v Hamsters club match	Hamsters match at MCC
18th-20th	<i>T&RA Category Level Singles</i>	<i>Level Singles, played in handicap bands</i>
26th & 27th	Barker Camm B Grade	Level Singles, handicaps 25-35
16th APRIL	Holyport v RTC club match	One-day club match at Holyport, for h/caps below 40
7th & 8th MAY	Cambridge & Newmarket v RTC club match	A two-day match in at Cambridge and Newmarket courts, open to all handicaps
12th (to 6th August)	Summer Night Pennant	Round robin team tournament on Thursday nights
14th	Chairman's Event	Social event on the RTC court
15th	Annual General Meeting and Barker Camm A Grade Final	
26th to 30th	King's Goblet Weekend	5-day handicap doubles tournament, open to all Real Tennis players around the world
10th to 12th JUNE	Fontainebleau v RTC club match	A three-day event at Fontainebleau Palace

Wood's (wisest) words

RTC's Head Professional Nick Wood gives a masterclass in Real Tennis strategy

Using strategy to improve your Tennis

The game of Tennis is a wonderful, yet traumatic affair. The physical and psychological trials of the unpredictable and unreliable are the true beauty of the game. These features may cause great frustration but when the ball 'sings' off the racket, that is what brings you back for more. A clear and imaginative process of plotting a way through these trials and traumas will help lead to a clearer development plan and - who knows - more wins!

Whether it be winning a match or the overall development of your game, the secret is to master yourself before attempting to conquer the game or the opponent. Once you have yourself under control, utilising a strategy effectively aids improvement in play, and improvement in play aids the effective utilisation of more advanced strategy.

Read on to find out how to get more out of your tennis and move ever closer to your potential.

How do the best make it look so easy!

Like no other game, Real Tennis presents all kinds of difficulties. With all its oddities – the chases, the slopes, angles and edges of an asymmetric court, the quirks of the hand-made balls, the asymmetric racket with a tiny sweet spot - it all makes for an intriguing and challenging sport. These playing characteristics are plain to see, yet they are often forgotten or misunderstood when formulating an effective strategy. It is important to understand that, due to these characteristics, most points are lost due to unforced errors and yet many players do little to eradicate errors. In fact they generally do the opposite – they try to hit more winners to compensate.

Players with simple, well-structured form and technique make fewer errors and have the potential to add ever increasing levels of improvement. Top ranked players achieve high levels through the constant refinement of technique and the development of racket control, speed, agility, and strength. These are the fundamental building blocks that elevate skill whilst increasing a resilience and keeping errors to a minimum.

Imagine the building site crane that builds itself – tried and tested construction, the process is to build beneath itself to reach for the sky. So, for example, to add more pace to a force, it is a mistake to simply strive to hit the ball harder – technique and form will crumble instantly. Instead, develop footwork and rotational strength, and refine technique to accommodate greater power. Footwork and weight transfer will be more effective and rotational speed stronger, be sure to maintain racket control, and a more powerful shot will occur, seemingly without any greater effort.

The world's best players understand the opportunities that are present in a rally. Whether

it is a winning or defensive situation, how to respond is key. Sound technique and clarity of mind permit appropriate shot selection and accuracy. Choosing the correct shot option puts less stress on technique and energy resources, be it psychological or physical. With greater skill, consistency and accuracy comes clarity and confidence. This is cyclical and encourages 'The Zone'.

Understanding the chaos

As if the ball and the court are not unpredictable enough, the game becomes almost unfathomable when the players become involved. The individual players combine to create the most chaotic attributes to the game; framed and misaimed shots dominate the game, at any level. Together with sporadic moments of brilliance and outlandish luck – how is it possible to plot your way through a match!

It is human nature to try to run before walking. A 60 handicap will try to be a 40 handicap, a 30 handicap to be a 20 and so on, but it is this impractical ambition that holds the impatient back.

The best players, to achieve their level, relentlessly practice the basic areas of the game, whereas the ill-disciplined player will try to emulate the top players by attempting world class shots before developing the underlying skills.

Example rally: Convinced a cross court for the grille is the shot; no matter, after hitting the tambour, it results in a winning shot under the winning gallery (turn to the dedans gallery and accept the applause). Henceforth try to hit the tambour more regularly, after all this is the winning formula - The problem lies, however, in the proof that you cannot hit what you are aiming at!

Though important fundamental elements of skill were required to strike the ball over the net in the general direction of the corner, the outcome is not a demonstration of skill, but of an inaccurate and fortunate outcome.

The strategy in use here is a 'hit and see what comes of it' approach. Which, if you reflect on it, cannot be effectively evaluated and developed.

This is not to say this is not a genuine strategy, in fact, this is the approach that most players use throughout a match. It is a strategy of well-intentioned efforts with twists of fate riding the undulating wave of luck that brings a sackful of mixed results with no real discernible clarity into why or how the match was won or lost. How can you create a development plan based on that?

Reducing one's own chaos, or at least gaining an understanding of your own chaos is required when starting to work with strategy. Through this, the ability to manage emotions and decision making improves and leads the way to implementing strategic play.

Strategies

For those who want to progress their tennis, do not simply try to beat the opponent. The results achieved equal: success – well tried. Failure – try harder.

At the conclusion of a match, whether a win or a loss, it is helpful to know why and how the result came about. Putting it down to 'trying' does not provide an informative assessment or guide on how to progress the development of your game.

Competitive tennis is frenetic. Rallies are so random that the best 'strategy' to implement is simply to survive and avoid giving away the advantage.

The game has a way of allying itself to players who take this approach. Try to do more and you will become your own worst enemy. The game itself will perplex you and your opponent will happily pick up the pieces and claim the victory.

Beyond the serve, the rally is a random collection of erratic shots interspersed with set-plays where a pre-planned shot can be attempted. Strategy for most players should only be attempted during set-plays – ie the serve, shots from the penthouse and other similar 'sitters' - where pre-planned shots can be attempted.

The vast majority of rallies are resolved by forced or unforced errors, and not by outright winners and target hitting.

A player is far more prone to errors when at the receiver's end of the court, primarily due to the winning zone on the floor and the Tambour.

Hence, the recognised basic strategy of tennis involves being at the service end (the advantageous end) and not to give your opponent set plays at which they can reclaim the service end. That is, to serve effectively and refrain from hitting the ball on to the penthouse during the rally.

By doing so, you maximise the time at the advantageous end, winning more points. Equally, your opponent has reduced opportunities to achieve chases to regain the service end and will tend therefore to over-try, resulting in greater numbers of errors. Both outcomes positively improve your own point conversion.

Any use of a strategy beyond this requires an honest introspection of one's own current capability, and much discipline and time put to purposeful practice in relation to an achievable strategy. That is, to use strategy effectively - do not overreach your actual current ability.

It is too easy to just want to be a better player yet, through all the ranks of beginners to the world's best, so many players do not achieve true potential. This is mainly due to the lack of understanding of personal game development and the relative use of strategy.

STEP	H'CAP GENERALISED	SERVE STRATEGY	FUNDAMEN- TAL STRATEGY	GENERAL STRATEGY	PROFI- CIENT STRATEGY	SKILLED STRATEGY	ADVANCED STRATEGY	ELITE STRATEGY
1	60+	YES	YES					
2	40-60	YES	YES	YES				
3	20-40	YES	YES	YES	YES			
4	10-20	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		
5	0-10	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	
6	<0	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Strategy - where to start?

A worthwhile exercise is to video a match, and a) count the number of unforced errors, b) count the number of opportunities you give your opponent to hit a winner (whether they take advantage of it or not); and c) recognise the shots that were hopeful or that didn't result as intended. I suggest watching the video playback with your local pro to help analyse; it will help to create a practical development plan that you and your pro can follow.

On analysis, it would be perceptive to note that too many forces (shots for the Grille / Dedans) miss their target, however, this is not an area of improvement to incorporate in a development plan for a, say, 40 handicap player. Better to eliminate these attempts from play and focus on reducing unforced errors and improve the execution and consistency of shots in and around floor play – the areas where your opponent cannot reliably attack and make most errors. Improve overall use and control of length and increase the resilience to the pressure of opponent's shots. In doing so, fewer errors will occur and in turn your opponent will gift you with an increased number of errors.

Another exercise is to roll balls off the penthouse (main-wall service end) and see how many Hazard Galleries you can consistently hit. The same can be attempted from the Receiver end, hitting for the service end galleries. Practice this exercise and improve the fundamental building blocks and over time the improvement in this exercise will translate to better technique and all-round shot consistency and accuracy.

With an achievable development plan, your form and technique will improve in a way that will propel you toward greater skills and the use of advanced strategic options.

Use the guide at the top of this page to focus on the areas appropriate to your level. Then read on to find an example of a Development Plan.

Definitions of strategies:

Serve strategy – deliver consistent, accurate and timely serves appropriate to the opponent and game situation, serves that limit the opponents attacking opportunities.

Fundamental Strategy – reduce errors, retrieve more balls over the net (with sensible clearance) than your opponent and keep the ball off the penthouse!

General Strategy – control length during a rally; good length will draw out a lot of errors from your opponent and reduce their capability of attacking you.

Proficient Strategy – use width to find floor-sidewall shots and galleries on set-plays, whilst maintaining the previous skills and strategies

Skilled strategy – with the above skills, implement

court craft. From many areas of the court, recognise opportunities to strategically strike the ball with accuracy using net clearance, length and width of shot.

Advanced strategy – further developing the above, use greater accuracy, variability in pace and severity, along with greater resilience to opponents play.

Elite strategy – Game plan - pre-plan shot options for multiple scenarios within rallies as well as set plays, that are effective for each opponent.

Note - <0 handicap players continuously practice all strategies and the fundamental skills required to deploy them, to achieve greater effectiveness and improved levels of play.

Game Plan or play to your ability?

Beware, a game plan requires statistical information; is only viable if you understand the development of the rally and the shot options within; manipulation of rallies and the ability to hit the ball to where you want it to go from a multitude of scenarios. The game plan, therefore, is only useful to the elite players.

For most players, a game plan is a distraction from getting on with playing to your capability. 'Survival' is more appropriate for most players. With a general perception of the opponents play, focus purely on what your capability can reliably deliver. A general approach to shot objectives – over the net, to a good length, and when the ball is on the penthouse, deploy practised and specifically chosen shots – will keep the strategy simple, clear and achievable.

If the result is a loss, then develop one of, or a combination of speed, agility, strength and greater racket control to achieve more balls over the net, improve general length of shot, and accuracy in set plays. Once you have mastered this and your opponent can effectively counter this play, you will move to the next level of strategy and play. Those who develop the fundamental building blocks more effectively will keep advancing their game.

This process puts you on a positive escalating spiral where good physical play complements positive psychological play which complements effective use of strategy which complements improvement... onwards and upwards.

One of the great players once said he could play to 5 handicap by purely keeping the ball on the floor. He was doing himself a disservice and a 0 handicap would have struggled to survive on court under these conditions.

Equally, a high-thirties handicap has recently applied the simple 'survival' strategy, and in the

process picked up 4 handicap titles.

May be this could be you too - Use the table above to find out what Step to focus on, then structure your practice and play with objectives and disciplines suggested to create a development plan. For example:

Step 1: Understand what serves prevents your opponent from attacking you; improve accuracy and consistency to deliver. Stop serving sitters!

Step 1: Practise to simplify and refine your technique. Optimise and improve ball strike and net clearance. Focus on increasing the number of balls over the net under increasing pressure and STOP over-hitting on to the penthouse!

Step 2: Develop length of shot by practising hitting two bounces before the back wall (even if it is down the middle of the court). Improve discipline and execution during games.

Step 3: Develop and incorporate the use of effective width to your shots. Maintain good technique even when retrieving floor-sidewall shots. Start to use galleries to set and beat chases.

Step 4: Understand and practise your shot selection given varying scenarios. To use effectively in games this needs to be subconscious and instantaneous.

Step 5: Develop strength, speed, and agility to achieve control of power and severity of shot.

Step 6: Watch and take notes of opponent's strengths and weaknesses; see what shots and strategies other players use. Understand your own strengths and weaknesses. Incorporate this info into strategies and then practise, practise, practise Steps 1 through 5!

So, to use a strategy to beat your opponent, do not try and be a better player, try being a more disciplined version of yourself. Stick to the strategy you can effectively play; whether a 70-handicap serving good length bobbles and keeping the ball off the penthouse during the rally, or a top amateur serving to restrict the return of serve and keeping the ball on the floor.

By doing so, you will be implementing your play in a structured and purposeful way. You will gain more precise feedback about your own game, more knowledge of current capability, and a clearer insight into the areas that require improvement and those that should be avoided in match situations. You will then begin to understand what *has* to be improved.

With this clarity you can find your potential...



Picture this...

That fine club player Doug Sheperdigian is also a keen and talented photographer of all things Real Tennis. This and future Newsletters will feature some of his favourite images, both on and off court. Thanks Doug and keep papping!

Top: Owen Saunders and Peta Louise focus on the De Lazlo Bowl; right a young Jasper takes centre stage between Nick Wood and Clare Buckingham; below, two lovely RTC ladies, Linda Sheraton Davis and Gitte Dunkley take a time out in the club room.



New rack will stretch you

RTC fully supports members cycling to and from the court. It's good for the environment and good for a warm-up and warm-down before and after a strenuous game.

Often members (and Pros...) would leave bikes cluttering the entrance corridors of the club, bringing with them the outside dirt and wet weather. But not any more. A solution has been found - after many of hours searching for an affordable and suitable storage for members bikes we believe we have done it. Its true purpose is in fact an animal shelter...but it works just as well as a bike shelter!

The new bike shelter can be found on the right as you pass along the entrance corridor from Tennis Court Lane - opposite the Blaber's apartment door. A bike stand (not sheltered) is also available in the kitchen courtyard, located by the Wilderness entrance to the club rooms.

It is important to use this facility and not clutter the corridors with bikes. And always stay safe on the busy roads.

Nick Wood

Re-introducing the opportunity to entertain at RTC - Friday and Saturday nights are now available for members to arrange an evening to entertain friends at the club. This is for all members, including social members.

A typical evening consists of a short exposition of tennis by one of the Professionals, demonstrating and explaining the game, followed by a brief on-court instruction. The court is then available for play amongst your guests. Self-catering is encouraged. The club rooms, garden and kitchen are available for use. All this for the reasonable cost of £110.

Conditions require a maximum of 12 guests and the club facility left as it is found. Contact the Professionals to book.

Nick Wood has developed and created an online retail outlet for Real Tennis clothing, equipment and gifts, particularly with RTC merchandise in mind but not solely. Check it out at www.therealtennisshop.com

From rackets and shirts to cufflinks and ties, new coffee mugs and face masks, all items are ready for sale. We are also stocking the new Real Tennis board game called Reste, developed by RTC member Giles Doy (see box on right). It's in limited edition, so purchase online or ask the Pro team to get your hands on it! All items are available online (sent by post) and also via the on-site Pro shop.

Lockdown? Give it a Reste

Sometimes inspiration can come in the most unlikely of places. Even a traffic jam between junctions 2 and 3 on the M3 on a wet Monday night in January can bring creativity.

There I was, on my way to the Camden/Nicky eliminator at the Oratory, and I said to a friend of mine, "I wonder what a Real Tennis board game would be like?"

We pondered a few ideas as the traffic crawled forward and then thought nothing more of it - our minds watching in awe as Camden carefully dismantled Nicky Howell's game over five sets.

Fast forward two months: the first national lockdown takes hold, RTC is closed and my mind goes back to those ideas for a board game. And so, over those early days of the pandemic, I began to develop a card game. Something that replicates the skill and tactics of Real Tennis in a board game format.

The result is Reste - possibly (?) the first Real Tennis board game. Play as a two-player or four-player (doubles) game, playing cards to set chases, hit targets and win points. Keep score using the score board - the first to win six games is the winner. It can be a useful introduction to the game for friends who have not played the 'real' thing! RTC is now stocking copies of Reste in the Pro shop, at £35 each. A perfect gift for any Real tennis fanatic!

We are delighted that junior tournaments are starting again. Entry is now open for the British Junior Real Tennis Championships on Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd August 2021 at The Queen's Club. The tournament is split into age groups (U12, U14, U16, U18). Although the tournament is played off level, less experienced players are also strongly encouraged to enter as the tournament is organised into groupings initially by handicap. It is a fantastic opportunity to play at the prestigious Queen's Club in London W14.