

THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT

Hampton Court Palace



STANDING TALL

DORIAN DREW BEATS PAUL WRIGHT TO STORM
TO LATHOM BROWNE CUP WIN

See page 4

The Winter Newsletter 2010

Number ninety-four

chairman's chat

On behalf of the board I must begin by sending season's greetings to all our members and wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

Following our plea to support the club's social events we have had an absolutely fantastic response to the Carol Service. I am so disappointed that I will be out of the country on 15 December, but I'm sure everyone will lift the roof off the Chapel Royal.

While on the social theme, I mentioned last time that the board and professionals were keen to organise a formal club dinner to enable members and partners to meet socially and, most importantly, to celebrate playing success at the club. I can now confirm that this will be held on Saturday 26 March 2011 at Hampton Court Golf Club at 7.30pm. Tickets will cost £47.50, to include a three-course dinner and a selection of wine and soft drinks. Dress will be black tie. Tickets will be on sale from Monday 13 December from the professionals, so please get your applications in as soon as you can.

I recently attended my first meeting of club chairmen at the Tennis and Rackets Association and, under the new management team, the Association has a robust budget in place and there are a number of important initiatives under way. Our own Nick Wood and the RTPA have devised a new training programme for professionals to develop the necessary skills to carry out their expanding roles more effectively. The Association is also offering a subsidised consultancy programme to help clubs develop

best management practices. You will notice new publicity material at RTC promoting the role of the T&RA and I would urge those of you who are not yet members to consider joining and contributing to the infrastructure of the game. Please ask Nick and his team for more details.

Turning to parochial matters; you will appreciate that our club relies on a few key volunteers to provide specific skills and advice alongside the everyday commitment of the professional team. We believe we could do much to improve the presentation and promotion of our club to attract new members, to spread the word about this wonderful game, and to generate revenue for the ultimate benefit of the club and its members. We would now like to identify one or two members with relevant skills who might be able to contribute in these areas. Please contact me if you feel you can help.

Finally, we have a number of teams heading down under to the Boomerang Cup in Melbourne in January, and I know you will wish them good luck. Hopefully they will be the second leg of a glorious antipodean treble as we retain the Ashes and Andy Murray wins his first major!



Paddy Sweetnam

DATES FOR THE DIARY National League

☛ RTC's second home IRTPA National League Premier Division match of the season will take place on **Wednesday 8 December**, starting at 6pm. Nick Wood and Peter Wright will take on a Middlesex University team featuring David Woodman and Matty Ronaldson. Tickets are on sale now from the professionals.

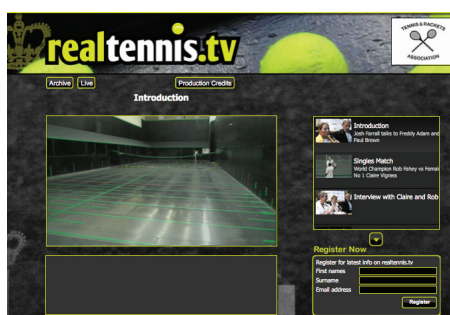
Field Trophy

☛ Having received a bye in the first round, RTC have a home tie against Cambridge on **Sunday 12 December** in the Field Trophy, the team event for the top amateurs from each club. I'm sure the team would really appreciate the support of any members who come along to watch – you are guaranteed some fine singles and doubles action.

realtennis.tv

Sunday 31 October saw an experimental live online broadcast of top-class real tennis from Lord's, featuring an exhibition match between Rob Fahey and Claire Vigrass (off handicap) followed by doubles involving Nick Wood.

The picture and sound quality were excellent, showing just what can be done with the proper resources. Congratulations to Paul Brown and Frederika Adam, who masterminded the event. To see the results for yourself, go to www.realtennis.tv



COMING UP

RTC

8 Dec: National League Premier Division: RTC v Middlesex (see left)
15 Dec: Carol Service
19 Dec: RTC v Hardwick
13 Jan: Winter Pennant starts (56-80)
15-16 Jan: Barker Camm Cup (30-39)
5-6 Feb: Harris Watson doubles
12-25 Feb: Barker Camm Cup (sub-20)
19-20 Feb: Barker Camm Cup (20-29)

ELSEWHERE

6-9 Dec: Browning Cup (Hatfield)
1-3 Jan: Fathers & Sons Championship (Leamington)
4-9 Jan: Under-21 and Under-24 Open Championships (Middlesex U)
8-22 Jan: Boomerang Cup (Melbourne)
22-23 Jan: Henry Leaf Cup (schools old boys event) (Middlesex U)
25-31 Jan: Australian Open (Melbourne)
1-4 Feb: World Doubles (Melbourne)
9-13 Feb: Seacourt Silver Racquet (Seacourt)
25-26 Feb: Varsity Match (Lord's)

Professional Development Fund

John Clark writes on behalf of the trustees on how you can help young pros

Chris Chapman made it to the quarter finals of the British Open in mid-November following a successful early season, his first on the circuit. He also reached the final of the IRTPA satellite tournament in Manchester and played the game of his life so far to lose narrowly to the world No 5, Bryn Sayers, in the main IRTPA tournament. The RTC Professional Development Fund trustees are delighted to be supporting him as he reaches towards higher achievements.

The Fund was founded in 2004 and a number of members have very generously contributed to it since then on a continuing basis, complemented by fund-raising dinners so effectively organised by Peter Flood. These contributions enabled the Fund to assist several professionals to receive training and treatment to enhance their competitive careers. In particular the Fund supported Ben Matthews, working with him to support his plan for progress until he decided to take a good opportunity elsewhere after some years at RTC. Ironically it was Ben, now No 7 in the world, who beat Chris in the quarter-finals of the British Open, so RTC, through the Fund, had a stake in two of the youngest players in the tournament – a pleasing return for the first years of the Fund and most

encouragingly putting young players into the top ranks.

The Fund provides the opportunity for physical and personal training, for the costs of playing in major tournaments around the world (Chris will be in Melbourne for the Australian Open in January) and assistance with courts and equipment, working with the professional to assess forward needs against his objectives. The grants from the Fund fill gaps in training and participation that the professionals can ill-afford. The aim is to produce top-flight tournament players for RTC but also to ensure a throughput of skilled players for the benefit of the game overall.

We need your support to revitalise the finances of the Fund to be sure that we can maintain a proper level of support for our professionals to be leaders among those skilled players. The trustees of the Fund are appealing to all members, either those contributing for the first time or those already contributing, to add donations to the Fund.

Regularity of contribution is very helpful. This is most conveniently done by simply authorising an increase to your existing quarterly direct debits, for a period of a year minimum, on the form enclosed within this newsletter

and returning it to the club as directed.

A separate authorisation declaration with further explanation is included with this newsletter for your completion. Of course, donations of whatever size, by other means, will be just as much appreciated.

Participation in the Fund also gives you the opportunity to take a more direct interest in the progress of our professionals and to support Nick Wood in promoting promising candidates, as he has done so well with Chris. Nick has been a hugely influential part of Chris's improvement through assiduous training. Support of both of them in future tournaments does help build confidence and promote the club – regular emails now detail the opportunities to give support and the progress the players are making. Please do try to support our players with your presence at tournaments. We have the players to make this worthwhile and enjoyable and we hope you will be able to give both financial and vocal aid to RTC's playing professionals.

Please contribute generously and often to enjoy even more involvement in a great game.

The Fund's trustees are Simon Barker, John Clark and David Watson

Plan B works for Barker

Simon adds yet another title to his long, long list

Club champion Simon Barker picked up yet more silverware in October, taking the T&RA's category B title, open to players with handicaps of 10-19, down in Bridport.

Despite going into the tournament with a handicap of 14, Simon (pictured) overcame Horatio Cary (11) and Matt Potter (12) on his way to the final, where he was up against former rackets world champion John Prens (10). Simon allowed John to take a 6/4, 5/3 lead before pulling the match back from the brink. He pickpocketed the second



set and ran away with the third, 6/0. An outstanding success.

Meanwhile, I'm not nearly modest enough to gloss over the fact that there was more joy elsewhere for RTC, with your newsletter editor claiming the far less prestigious category D trophy (30-39) at Hatfield. I can thoroughly recommend both the Hatfield club (friendly members, beautiful court) and these events, which offer a great chance to experience competitive three-set matches against players of similar ability away from your home court.



Nick Carew Hunt and Pip Steen (above) emerged from two hectic weekends of action with the de Laszlo Bowl, the handicap doubles tournament in which players cannot cross the centre line at either end. An honourable mention is due to their worthy opponents Dan Callaghan and Terry Marsh, who pushed the final all the way to a thrilling 8/7 climax.

Lathom Browne Cup

New sharp-shooters abounded in the later stages – but one man stood in their way

The 2009/10 Lathom Browne handicap singles belonged to the newcomers. In most other years, one or two improvers storm through as the fixed handicaps of autumn lag behind their on-court winter progress, but on this occasion we had six or seven of the blighters.

There was one wily old sheriff who stood up to these new gunslingers, however: Paul Wright, a man whose youthful looks conceal the length of time he has been an RTC stalwart. Indeed, in the two finalists we had quite a contrast. Up against Paul was Dorian Drew, who has spent the past year eagerly learning the nuances of the game and reducing his handicap in large chunks each month (despite a lingering fondness for topspin shots).

Their routes to the final reflected this difference. Having started out in the competition last September with a handicap of 56, Dorian had very little trouble in the early rounds, easing his way to the final of grade G. In that final he faced John Priestland, a fellow improving newcomer who had come in off 55 and had a stunning 27:4 games won/lost ratio in his three previous wins. Dorian was coming along faster than John, though, and a 9/6 win took him through to the quarter-finals – whereupon, as a first-time entrant, his handicap was updated to 44.

Paul, whose handicap has been more stable in the low 30s for some time, had to expend far more energy in grade B,



Dorian Drew, club handicap champion

winning his matches 9/6, 9/7, 9/7 and 9/7 again. Having seen off grade A winner Simon Edmond, Paul then pulled off his best result yet in the semi-finals, beating yet another improver, Stephen Goss, who was off 44 for this event but had lowered his handicap a few points by then.

Meanwhile, Dorian dealt well with the tricky challenge of giving a 23 handicap allowance to John Traversi before dispatching Elvira Campione 9/6 in his semi-final.

And so it came to pass, with Paul giving Dorian 11 in the grand final. The dedans pundits were unanimous in tipping Dorian, having observed his fine play in the weeks leading up to the match, and after two games they were

even more confident about their prediction. Once Paul settled down, though, he showed every sign of upsetting the odds, playing sensible tennis and putting away his chances when they came along. At 4/4 we looked set for a long, tight match.

It was at this point that Dorian upped his game, however, unleashing a series of winners that most 44s can only dream of stringing together. The key moment came with Dorian 6/4 up and the score at 40-40, after Paul had fought back from 40-owe 30 down. Defending a second-gallery chase, Paul stood frozen as a wide Dorian force down Paul's backhand side bounced off the back wall to take a second bounce at last gallery, easily winning the chase. It was a ball Paul would have reached easily if only he had moved, but a lack of concentration saw him trail 7/4.

Dorian sensed blood, and he won two games to 30 to close it out 9/4. An intriguing final ended with a deserved winner who will leave no stone unturned in his title defence this season (see page 5 for an illustration of just how keen this man is).

For those of you who are competing in the 2010/11 Lathom Browne and may be feeling disheartened by this talk of improvers: don't be. These things are cyclical, and the chances are we won't see another group of talented newcomers like the class of 09/10 for a good few years. At least, that's the hope I'm clinging to...

The world's greatest knockout event

If you ask people, "What's the biggest knockout tennis tournament in the world?", most will answer "Wimbledon" and some smart alecks will say "The All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club Championships". They would be wrong – it's the Lathom Browne Cup, RTC's annual handicap singles knockout tournament.

The competition is open to all RTC members, with players competing in graded divisions, each match being one set to nine games marked by the professionals. The winners of each grade progress to the quarter-finals. This season there are 119 players battling it out in eight divisions, although

at the turn of the century there were as many as 160 players competing.

Competitors' handicaps are fixed at the start of the tournament in early autumn, but "rapid improvers" (aka bandits) playing in the Cup for their first time can, at the professionals' discretion, suffer a handicap realignment at the quarter-final stage.

The Cup was originally donated to the Prince's Club in Brighton by the Reverend R.C. Lathom Browne in 1925, and it was played for at Brighton until the club closed in 1939.

The Cup was first contested at the Royal Tennis Court in 1948 and the inaugural winner was David Warburg,

who went on to win the Amateur Championship three times.

Winners in recent years have tended to come from the middling handicap ranges as sub-30 players have struggled when in the unfamiliar territory of ceding large handicap differences. Two of the recent winners – Carolyn Nicholls and Nicola Doble – are the only players in the past fifty years to have won the Cup twice. Pull your socks up, gentlemen!

If you are one of the 118 players who get knocked out this year, don't be disheartened – even three-time world champion Howard Angus never got the Lathom Browne on his CV, having lost in the final.

The picture of Dorian's day

Fresh from his Lathom Browne triumph, Dorian Drew laid waste to a former colony

With a weekend to spare in early October between work commitments, and with Nick Wood's assistance, I played six games on six different US courts over one long weekend. Here is the email blog I wrote on my travels:

One down...

Princes Court is great. It doesn't play that differently from RTC, but the main wall, entirely made out of glass, adds a totally different dimension. You can watch a game sitting on leather sofas behind the main wall. I had a hit with the pro, who used to live in Surbiton, and then played a guy from Southampton. I lost 6-3, 6-5 playing off level. So much for my "US" road trip.

One down, five to go; and my car was upgraded to a Merc.



Princes Court, Washington DC

Two down...

The Racquet Club of Philadelphia is very grand, like something out of *Around the World in 80 Days*. It was built in the 1800s by about 20 wealthy locals. There's lots of wood and it's a bit tatty round the edges. The court is on the fourth floor and the pool is on the third. It's 8ft deep, so I have no idea how it doesn't crash down into the basement.

The court is quite slow, but true. We again played off level, and it didn't start well: I lost the first set 6-4. Then I worked out my opponent's backhand was not strong, won the second set 6-1 and the third 6-4. Yee haw!

A good shower is one of life's pleasures, and these were a delight. The shower head was at least 12 inches across and the cubicle must have been 5ft across. The only disconcerting thing was that the showers are on full display from the bar (in the changing rooms) and there's no curtain!



The changing room at Philadelphia

Three down...

I am now net positive in terms of winning games. I played a very nice guy in Tuxedo Park, beating him 6-4, 6-4, 6-3, with him receiving 15. The sky is totally clear and it is warm, but even on a dull day this place would be beautiful. The court is in a grand old building nestled beside a lake on a huge private estate. The houses around the lake are monstrously big and wouldn't be out of place in *The Great Gatsby*.

Four and five down...

Newport is lovely, although it wasn't always so and it has seen substantial investment. The town was home to the America's Cup between 1930 and 1983 and the houses are made of slatted wood with big verandas and the Stars and Stripes fluttering in the breeze.

The real tennis court is on the site of the International Tennis Hall of Fame. One of the items on display is the 1874 patent registered by Major Walter Clopton Wingfield for a "new and improved portable court for playing the ancient game of tennis". I'm not sure about the "improved" bit.

The court is airy and bright. My opponent was a former professional Jai alai player from the Basque region of Spain (think squash on a court 180ft long using baskets strapped to your



The court at Tuxedo Park

arm and a solid ball that can travel at nearly 200mph). Sadly, the fronton (court) in Newport was closed and replaced by slot machines as they're more profitable. Despite his being a 35 handicap we played off level: I won the first set 6-2 and he won the next two 6-1 and 6-4. My favourite game so far.

The club in Boston is lovely and situated in the centre of the city. The game was enjoyable – a 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 win, although my opponent's handicap was 57 and mine was 40 and we only played off rec 15-owe 15.

Six down...and that's all folks!

It wasn't by design, but I definitely left the most impressive club until last. To set the scene, the New York Racquet and Tennis Club is in a prime location on Park Avenue at 52nd Street. On four floors, it takes up about a third of a block. The estimated cost of construction about 100 years ago was \$400,000. As I was walking in a sign said they now spend \$500,000 per year just on the upkeep of the building.

The changing rooms have to be seen to be believed. There are 40-50 open stalls around the edge of a room with deep pile carpet and sofas dotted around.

I turned up early, so I managed to get a quick warm-up on one court and then played my game on the other. I played a 50 handicapper off rec 15-owe 15 and won 6-0, 6-0, 6-3. Even though the result indicated it was somewhat one-sided, we had some good rests. The courts are great and my railroad was working well (for a change).

In *The Blues Brothers*, there is a line that goes: "It's 106 miles to Chicago, we got a full tank of gas, half a pack of cigarettes, it's dark, and we're wearing sunglasses." As I don't smoke and there's no point in going to Chicago as it doesn't have a real tennis court (for now), here are my own statistics... In three days, I drove 530 miles, spent 14 hours travelling and eight hours playing on seven courts in six clubs. I won four matches and lost three and my handicap dropped by two points. My youngest opponent was 16 and my oldest about 60. Finally, everyone I met was very welcoming, both players and pros alike. Maybe next year I can wangle a work trip to Australia...

Clever Dick downs Holyport

A new talent helped RTC knock out the defending champions in the Brodie Cup

RTC overcame defending champions Holyport in the first round of the 2010/11 Brodie Cup, edging a tight encounter by three rubbers to two.

The Brodie Cup is the inter-club knockout tournament for players with handicaps of between 30 and 55, and the result was sweet revenge for the narrow defeat by Holyport in last year's quarter-final. Several old rivalries were renewed, with half the players having played in last year's fixture.

Having secured home advantage (their enormous balls are a real challenge for anyone used to Hampton Court's little bullets), Holyport were looking to strike fear into the hearts of RTC's players: the Brodie Cup itself was displayed on a plinth outside the dedans, and six-time world champion (and Holyport member) Penny Lumley was present to cheer them on.

Leading RTC off was Simon Edmond, who seemed out of sorts against Nick Parkinson and went down in two sets. Nick was playing great tennis, finding a good length and retrieving almost everything. Despite Simon's attempts to force Nick to a third set (which would surely have seen a coronary for Holyport's bon viveur), Nick won a deserved straight sets victory.

In the first doubles, Owen Saunders and Anthony Wolfe started poorly, deservedly taking a first-set thrashing before waking up and concentrating on the basics. As sure as night follows day, if you keep getting it over the net in doubles the mistakes will eventually come from your opponents, and the Holyport pair made several uncharacteristic errors as they tried to force the game. Owen and Anthony's victory wasn't one for the purists, but winning ugly definitely feels better than losing pretty.

Lathom Browne Cup winner Dorian Drew continued his irrepressible rise by dispatching Holyport's secret weapon, teenager Tara Lumley. Tara played some remarkable shots, including base-of-tambour retrieves and dedans-defending volleys, but Dorian was always in control despite never quite getting his railroad serve firing.

With the match on a knife edge at 2-1 to RTC with two rubbers to play, RTC newcomer Dick Cowling took on Nick Broad. Due to the Brodie Cup's esoteric rules, Dick went into the game holding a four-point handicap advantage over his opponent: good news for RTC, as all Brodie Cup games are played off level. It seemed at times like Dick was playing an octopus as the very tall Nick reached

out to retrieve everything and relentlessly used the 'moon-ball scoop' to great effect. However, Dick remained ice cool throughout and his backhand volleying was of the highest order as he ultimately won comfortably, giving RTC an unassailable 3-1 lead.

Brodie Cup stalwarts Nick Carew Hunt and Richard East were therefore presented with a dead rubber. This was good news for RTC, as the late arrival of the Holyport pairing had Richard and Nick chuntering indignantly as they paced impatiently around the dedans like caged tigers. After a very slow start, they hit their straps and started playing great tennis just too late, losing 6/1 6/5.

The man-of-the-match award goes to Dick Cowling, who produced a fantastic display on Brodie Cup debut – everyone agreed they hadn't seen such a high-quality singles match between two 50 handicappers. Next up, MCC at Lord's on 12 December.

Owen Saunders

Scores: 30+ Simon Edmond lost to Nick Parkinson 4/6 3/6; **35+** Owen Saunders & Anthony Wolfe beat Andy Parkinson & Mark Piper 1/6 6/2 6/3; **40+** Dorian Drew beat Tara Lumley 6/3 6/0; **45+** Nick Carew Hunt & Richard East lost to Tim Bertram & Martyn Rowlands 1/6 5/6; **50+** Dick Cowling beat Nick Broad 6/2 6/1.

National League

Our Premier Division team had quite an opening fixture this season: a home match against a Prested Hall team of Ben Matthews and our own Chris Chapman (filling in for Ricardo Smith). So much for home advantage.

In the opening singles, a below-par Peter Wright was put to the sword by Chris, who served notice of the fine results that would be just round the corner for him with a truly superb display of power and control. Then Nick Wood and Ben played an intriguing and very tight match, as you would expect between two players who know each other's games so well. Both had moments of brilliance mixed in with quite a few errors, but in the end the student overcame the teacher, Ben winning 6/3 in the third.

Nick and Peter gained some consolation by winning the doubles, but after losing 3/0 at Queen's in their next match they will be eager to win their next home game on Wednesday 8 December, versus Middlesex University.

In Division One Chris Chapman and Charlie Crossley have started strongly, while the Division Two team of David Watson, Simon Barker and James Sohl (also aided by Charlie Packham) have three wins from three.

Pro tournaments

The season began in earnest for the elite players with September's French Open in Bordeaux. After the top four seeds had made their way to the semis, Steve Virgona had his customary five-set classic with Camden Riviere before threatening to dethrone Rob Fahey. Fahey fought back from a 2/1 deficit in sets to win the final two sets 6/2 6/0.

Up to Manchester for the IRTPA Championships, and the same semi-final line-up. This time Bryn Sayers took Fahey to five sets, while Virgona won another five-setter with Camden, who decided afterwards that it was time to get his troubled shoulder seen to. We wish him a speedy recovery. The world champion was too good for Virgona in the final.

Without Camden, the British Open at Queen's gave Ben Matthews a fine chance to reach another major semi-final, which he took with aplomb, ending the great run of our own Chris Chapman in the quarters. Bryn Sayers saw off the returning Tim Chisholm in an enthralling quarter-final, but he and Ben were then soundly beaten in the semis by the all-conquering Australians. This final between the world's top two was closer, but after four close sets Fahey had yet another title. Who can stop him? Answers on a postcard.

The season is well under way. Not only have the RTC club tournaments started, including the Lathom Browne, the Barker Camm Cup F, E & D grades and the de Laszlo Bowl, we also have seven teams representing the club in the IRTPA National League (sponsored by luxuryfamilyvillas.com) and teams competing in the T&RA events – the Field Trophy and the Brodie Cup.

Keep an eye out for the dates of all these events. All participants would really appreciate your support, as spectators and the support they bring have an enormous impact on players, matches and the events they are competing in. It also enhances member involvement and the club atmosphere.

As I wrote the original version of this report, Chris Chapman and I were still competing in the British Open (sponsored by Neptune Investment Management) at Queen's. Sadly we both were knocked out in the quarter-finals of the singles, and we narrowly lost out to the number three seeds in the doubles quarter-finals. The earlier stages of the tournament saw increased spectator numbers compared to previous events, with a large contingent of RTC members attending. It makes such a difference and is always appreciated, so thank you – you know who you are.

Chris, who has been with us for four months, has already made big strides,

CHAMPAGNE
POL ROGER

The Royal Tennis Court Club Championships The Barker Camm Cup

CANAPÉ
COMPANY

Preliminary rounds

Saturday 12 – Sunday 20 February

Semi-finals

Monday 21 & Tuesday 22 February

* * * * *

Championship Finals Evening

Friday 25 February

Champagne reception & canapés from 6.30pm

Final: 7.15pm

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Tickets for the Finals Evening are only £10

Seating will be arranged on the night – first come, first served

Kindly supported by Pol Roger and The Canapé Company

with matches in the National League, IRTPA Championships and now the British Open. He has demonstrated his innate ability and desire to become a great player and has also delivered some encouraging results – the final of the IRTPA Satellite singles, a close three-set loss to world No 5 Bryn Sayers in the IRTPA Championships, and fine wins over a 0.5 handicap and a +2 handicap in the British Open. I would definitely encourage those who have yet

to see him play to take the next opportunity to watch and support.

Stef King, as you may know, is a very keen runner and an all-round athlete – and he has recently, along with a sports massage qualification, obtained a qualification for personal training, with a particular interest in fitness and conditioning for real tennis. Why not have a chat to him about preparing for and improving your physical condition for your game?

Wood's Words

Head pro Nick Wood on how you too can be world-class. Well, almost...

The theme of this issue is inspired by having watched the British Open this year, the words of advice come from observing the best players in the world.

There is no one way to play this game; players are individuals with their own techniques, physical prowess and stratagems, and I have noticed over the years what it is that makes players great. It's not the amazing shots that they hit – we can all hit amazing shots – it's the fact that they can hit amazing shots regularly and make it look easy.

How do they do it? By starting off with a simple concept: playing to

their strengths. Great players establish early on what they can do, what they can't do, what they would like to do, and how to go about achieving it. By building a clear plan and practising regularly, a player can work on achievable targets, such as physical strength, foot speed, accuracy.

These are things that all players, no matter what standard, can work on. Rather than entering the court to improve/protect your handicap, to improve an aspect of your game, whether it is a forehand or hitting chase galleries, a clear, disciplined plan will help you to achieve a

better playing standard. And we all know what that means!

To see progress it may take six months, as these things don't come quickly. Don't forget the athletes you see competing at the British Open have been practising as often as they can, and for many years. Through deliberate practice they achieve simple things – put these simple things together and you get to be great.

So there you are: work on specific, simple and achievable aspects of your game, not the whole. With discipline, practice and time, your game can also improve.

East's hopes go south

Richard East, the club's official air miles collector, describes a less than successful trip to Aiken

RTC took a contingent of five to this year's Calhoun Witham doubles tournament at Aiken in South Carolina – out of a total UK contribution of six, not so tawdry.

The feelings of mutual loathing between the five caused some difficulty over partner selection for the organiser. We resolved this problem this year through my inspired decision that we would all partner Americans, and therefore our mood was much enhanced when we arrived. Whether the poor sods who were paired with us shared this view was yet to play out.

Dr Robin 'Feelgood' Mulcahy partnered Marge Goodyear of prosthetic arm fame. This he did not out of any concern for her nor from professional interest in her condition, but solely because he saw her as a route to allow him to spend his declining years nestled in the comfort of the Goodyear billions. He had a shocker of a tournament, so that won't happen.

Lord Oliver Buckley of Sealand partnered Kip Curren from Newport. Oliver, previously known to all as 'No-Knees', had pushed the theory, derived from the fact that he had had both of them replaced and is now known as 'New Knees', too far. Kip made him run the back, which was a joy for the spectators, so he had a shocker too, and Kip won't be playing with him again.

Alec 'Duke of the Gorbals' Miller refrained from giving his partner a Glasgie kiss for their whole partnership. He had been paired with John Iole, who had never met any of us before so played on serenely well in

spite of the chaos by his side, and carried Alec through to the semi-final, at which point Alec's evening and early morning exploits got the better of him.

James 'Earl of Godmanchester' Wilson drew a convicted felon, who was awaiting the call from the FBI as to when his jail sentence was going to start, which one could tell upset the good earl considerably. It made James very wary around the court, so he had a shocker too, and I don't think they will be meeting up when John gets out of Leavenworth.

And Richard East, organiser, played with John Murphy from Newport. Moiff hit me full on in the front of my face with his racket, trying to sweep the ball (which had come to rest) backhand off the dedans sill and return it, *after* it had been called dead by the marker (Wayne Davies), while I was approaching the dedans to collect balls for the next point. So we had a shocker. But he did buy me the most stunning Armani jacket in the Aiken charity shop for \$7.50, so he is full of heart.

The final was contested between two teams from Boston, both off ludicrous handicaps, and won by a serial pot hunter. Doesn't he feel demeaned to have won under such circumstances? Reader, I tell you, it did not show.

And the weather was fabulous. Not a cloud in the sky until the day we left. 25°C by day, 5°C by night. In November.

And so we roll on now. The Boomerang in Melbourne is the next big one, in January. Forget the British Open – this type of tournament is what the game is about.

Anyone who has played on a Sunday morning and noticed the enchanting smell of bacon wafting on to the court will recognise these three contented gourmands. The fourth, David Seelig, captured Keith Smith, Lindsay Hatchett and Tony Whitfield here tucking into their elevenses after their regular doubles session. Helps the Kronenbourg go down...



RESULTS

National League

Premier Division

RTC lost to Prested Hall 1/2

Nick Wood lost to Ben Matthews 4/6 6/5 3/6; Peter Wright lost to Chris Chapman 3/6 1/6; Wood & Wright beat Matthews & Chapman 8/4.

Queen's beat RTC 3/0

Bryn Sayers beat Nick Wood 6/0 6/1; Conor Medlow beat Peter Wright 6/4 6/4; Sayers & Medlow beat Wood & Wright 8/4.

De Laszlo Bowl

Quarter-finals: Dan Callaghan & Terry

Marsh beat Susie Falkner & Sara Stewart 8/7; Martin Bronstein & Paul Heaver beat Peter Brown & Chris Sheasby 8/2; Dick Cowling & James Dubois beat Robert Falkner & Wizzy Mason 8/2; Nick Carew Hunt & Pip Steen beat Stuart James & Kate Lawrence 8/6.

Semi-finals: Callaghan & Marsh beat Bronstein & Heaver 8/2; Carew Hunt & Steen beat Cowling & Dubois 8/4.

Final: Carew Hunt & Steen beat Callaghan & Marsh 8/7.

Lathom Browne Cup

Semi-finals: Paul Wright beat Stephen Goss 9/7; Dorian Drew beat Elvira Campione 9/6.

Final: Drew beat Wright 9/4.

Barker Camm Cup

F Grade, semi-finals: Doris Siedentopf beat John Clark 6/5 6/1; Glyn Saunders beat John Traversi 6/4 6/5.

Final: Saunders beat Siedentopf 6/2 6/4.

E Grade, semi-finals: Dick Cowling beat Robin Mulcahy 5/6 6/1 6/4; Pip Steen beat Mike Shattock 6/1 6/0.

D Grade, semi-finals: Paul Newton beat Eric Butterworth 6/4 2/6 6/5; Chris Sheasby v Richard Wear.

RTC Top Ten

Leading handicaps
November 2010

1	Peter Wright	4.0
2	Dave Harms	6.6
3	Robert Hird	7.1
4	David Watson	10.9
5	Simon Barker	11.7
6	Nick Hatchett	14.6
7	James Sohl	15.8
8	James Watson	16.9
9	Mike Bray	18.1
10	Jed Dalton	20.9

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contributions from members.
Please get in touch if you have
any ideas for the spring issue,
via the professionals or by
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