

THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT

Hampton Court Palace



NATIONAL VELVET

BLIZZARD'S BOYS LEAD RTC'S NATIONAL LEAGUE TITLE CHARGE

See page 4

The Summer Newsletter 2010

Number ninety-two

chairman's chat

I am honoured, and not a little daunted, to be writing my first column as your honorary chairman. As a recent convert to this wonderful game I hope to be able to contribute to a club which has given me so much in such a short time.

The AGM was held on Sunday 9 May and although we had no difficulty accommodating the throng, those present enjoyed some lively debate and an excellent presentation by my predecessor Peter Ohlson, on developments at the Tennis & Rackets Association. It has only become apparent to me in the past year just how much Peter has put into guiding the club through a challenging period and representing members' interests on broader issues, and I would like to formally thank him on behalf of the rest of the board and the membership. I am delighted to say that Peter has been persuaded to stay on the board in order to provide continuity in liaising with the T&RA during this critical time when the recommendations of the Hegarty and Hopton Reviews will be implemented.

I would also like to pay tribute to the enormous contribution made by your retiring financial director, Robert Falkner. Robert has an intimate understanding of the club's financial workings and its key relationships with external bodies such as the T&RA and Hampton Court Palace. We are very fortunate to have such an able replacement as David Main, who has been working alongside Robert for the past six months. This has ensured a smooth

Photograph by Murray Glover



transition and anyway, Robert, we know where you live!

We took the opportunity at the AGM to present the Chris Ronaldson Trophy to Fraser Shorey (pictured below) as the most improved player in the club, as determined by the professional team and the playing committee chaired by James Sohl.



My main aim as your chairman is to work with the board and Nick Wood's professional team to sustain the shared values of the club. I know Nick has ambitions to grow the competitive element of the club, not only externally but particularly with more internal competitions. This latter objective also complements a belief held by several members that there are opportunities to grow the social side of the club, not only for the enjoyment of members but also to improve the club's financial position.

As a relative newcomer I still feel that our club, and the game of real tennis for that matter, are well kept secrets and if we can market ourselves more effectively then the club and the sport will reap the benefit. To these ends, if there are any members who have ideas on social or marketing initiatives, please do contact me via the professionals, either in writing or by email.

Paddy Sweetnam

Barker does it again

There's just no stopping Simon in the Barker-Camm Cup

Congratulations to Simon Barker, who once again met David Watson in the final of the Barker-Camm Cup and once again prevailed, claiming an astonishing 11th title.

There is clearly little to choose between these two fine players, but whereas David gets the better of Simon for much of the year, the latter seems to have an edge when it comes to his favourite competition. This year, just as in 2009, Simon required three sets to complete the job, rebounding from a second-set blip to win 6/4, 1/6, 6/4.

The previous day's semi-finals had seen the next generation taking on the established duo. Karen Hird had notched up an impressively

comfortable win over John Ward to earn a shot at Simon, but the step up in class was a step too far on this occasion, with Simon advancing 6/1, 6/0. David's son James, meanwhile, had raised eyebrows by dismantling James Sohl in two sets, and he gave his old man a few anxious moments in the first set before Watson Sr pulled away to win 6/4, 6/1.

RTC is clearly lucky to have a batch of youngsters who are all pushing each other to improve, and once their university days are over one or more of them will be jostling to make the Berker-Camm honours board look rather less uniform. For now, though, Simon Barker will not be moved.

NEW PROFESSIONAL

☛ In July **Chris Chapman** will arrive from Melbourne to join the professional team. Although still relatively new to the game, Chris is a highly promising player and by all accounts a very likeable young man, so I'm sure he would appreciate a warm welcome from all members.

COMING UP

RTC

25-27 June: King's Goblet Summer Doubles

24-25 July: Junior Tournament weekend

ELSEWHERE

20-22 Aug: T&RA Junior Open Singles Championships, Queen's

20-27 Sept: French Open, Bordeaux

Fahey reigns supreme

Susie Falkner, chief executive of the IRTPA, describes how history was made in Melbourne by the great Rob Fahey

It was nearly the World Championship that didn't happen, due to the volcanic ash from Eyjafjallajökull. The world champion was meant to have left the UK on the day Europe's airspace was closed down. The Royal Melbourne club's president, Andrew Gould, managed to find a flight for him – so the moral of this is to contact Andrew Gould should your flight arrangements go awry!

So the action got under way as planned on 4 May, with three days and potentially 13 sets of action facing Rob Fahey and his challenger, Steve Virgona, who had defeated Camden Riviere 7-6 in an enthralling eliminator final in Tuxedo Park, New York.

DAY 1

The Royal Melbourne club was packed with 200-plus spectators, with support for each Australian well balanced.

Rob was very nervous at the start of the match and he was not moving well. To add to his obvious discomfort, Steve came out with all guns blazing. For the first three games Steve served perfect caterpillar serves. However, a badly served caterpillar is a gift to the returner, and slowly Rob found his way back into the set. Soon the champion had taken the first set 6/4.

In the second set Rob was unstoppable, quickly seizing a 3/0 lead. The fourth game was won by Steve, but then three returns of serve into the net helped Rob secure a 5/1 lead. Within three minutes another game had gone to Rob and the second set was his, 6/1.

Was this going to be a 4/0 first-day lead for Rob? The answer was no. Steve came out for the third set with a new spring to his step, chasing everything down, starting to ask questions of Rob's mobility and stamina. Although Rob lifted his game Steve played perfect controlled tennis to secure the set, 6/2. The crowd now went wild. Match on.

The players went game for game in the day's final set until Steve nudged 4/2 ahead. Steve was pumped and just anything he did was working for him

– but things began to swing around. Rob definitely went up a couple of levels, but Steve was still looking comfortable until he moved into a ball just in front of the service fault line looking to lay a chase, but it clipped the tape of the net and dropped back. Rob won the game and the score was drawing closer.

The eighth game was pivotal, with Rob, leading 30/0, winning one chase with a classic cut shot down the main wall and another by forcing an error from Steve. 4-4.

The next game was too exciting to describe accurately or to give credit to the players. There had already been some stunning points before a fizzing cut volley return saw Rob win a chase to lead 40/15. The next point, another second gallery chase, was extraordinary. Steve clipped the tambour low down, the ball crossed the floor and Rob somehow got part of his racket on it. The ball curled up and into last gallery. The reaction from Rob was as if he had won the match; the score was now 5/4.

With the score at 40/30 Rob in the next game, you could have heard a pin drop. Rob served a railroad and it was all that was needed. Set to Rob, and a crucial overnight lead.

End of day 1: Fahey leads 3/1 (6-4, 6-2, 2-6, 6-4)

“For those of you who have not yet seen Rob Fahey play, I would urge you to make the effort to see this extraordinary champion”

On the Wednesday evening the gala dinner was held. Rob said he thought the standard of tennis the day before had been good, but the standard of tennis on Thursday would be very special. Special it was, and Andrew Lyons, the marker, will tell you that it was the best tennis he has witnessed.

DAY 2

Steve dominated the first two games. Again he was serving caterpillars to great effect and soon led 3/1. Rob never looked fazed, though, and he struck back to take the first set 6/4. The play from both was outstanding; the difference was Rob always found that



Photograph © Frederika Adam – frederikaadam.blogspot.com

little bit extra, forcing Steve into errors. Steve managed to get to 5/5, before a deciding game that will live long in the memory of all who saw it. With Rob on set point, Steve had Rob scurrying like a spring chicken from side to side until a Rob backhand fizzed over the net, nicked the tambour and beat Steve's dive. The overall score was now 5/1.

The champ's intensity dropped in the next set, and with Steve 5/2 up a Rob howler gave Steve advantage and a chance to clinch game and set. He took it with a flourish as he hits the dedans.

Rob came out with guns blazing in the eighth set. There was nothing Steve could do and Rob soon had a 5/1 lead. The final game went very quickly and Rob won it to love.

End of day 2: Fahey leads 6 sets to 2 (6-4, 6-5, 3-6, 6-2)

DAY 3

Rob needed only one more set to retain his title. Who would be fresher? The 42-year-old was definitely primed for action. While Steve was possibly having problems in getting into the corners, Rob was clinical and brilliant, quickly claiming a 3/0 lead. Steve looked defeated. He did take a game, but there was nothing more he could do, and Rob easily took the set 6/1, retaining the title for a record ninth time.

Whether Rob decides to retire undefeated, we all just have to wait and see. For those of you who have not yet seen Rob Fahey play, I would urge you to make the effort to see this extraordinary champion play. I don't believe we will see such a complete player again.

National League review

Once again it was close but no cigar for RTC in the Premier Division

RTC has enjoyed a fine season in the National League, from Nick Wood and his various partners in the Premier Division down to the amateurs in the lower divisions. Four of the club's seven teams reached the final in their division, with one title in the bag and two finals yet to be played as this issue went to press.

Premier Division

It was an up-and-down season for our elite team. While Ben Matthews enjoyed a fruitful autumn, Nick Wood struggled with a back injury early on. He turned it round at Queen's in December, though, beating Bryn Sayers to help RTC climb up into contention.

RTC1 were well placed at halfway, especially with Nick regaining fitness and form. But then came the news that Ben would be leaving the club, meaning Peter Wright had to step up and fill the considerable gap. Peter coped admirably, beating Rod McNaughtan of MURTC and displaying some superb volleying as he teamed up with Nick to defeat Rod and Rob Fahey in the doubles.

With all the fixtures completed RTC1 had secured third place and an eliminator final away at Queen's. Peter was away in Madeira, so Nick needed yet another partner, and this time it was 'hired gun' Matty Ronaldson.

Matty was up first against home pro Andrew Lyons, a wily fox who is only two healthy knees away from being an exceptional player. Matty was a firm underdog – but after an hour of an intriguing match his regular forcing had paid off and he stood a set up and 5-5 in

the second, close to a shock win.

Andrew dug in, though, and once he had saved the second set he knuckled down to win the third.

Nick assumed command from the start against Bryn Sayers. Only a brief blip early in the second set held him up, but before long he had levelled the tie with a fine 6-1 6-4 victory.

In the deciding doubles, Nick constantly offered advice to Matty and took control whenever possible. The established pairing of Sayers and Lyons was unable to calm the Wood whirlwind and the RTC pair won two marathon games at 6-5 and 7-5 to wrap up a memorable success and a final spot.

Back at Queen's a week later, Team Fahey was lying in wait. RTC, however, had a trump card to play: Monsieur Matthews was back from France. After Ben had given RTC its expected lead, Rob had his traditional sluggish start but reeled off nine straight games from 0-2 down against Nick. Although Nick won four straight games of his own in fine style, a long, long game at 4-3 went Rob's way, and two games later we were facing a doubles decider.

From the start of the doubles it was clear that Rob and Rod were operating more in tandem than Nick and Ben were. With Rod, who was obviously being targeted, playing what must have been one of the best doubles matches of his life, the MURTC pair were never headed and eased away to an 8-4 win and yet another title for the maestro.

Although Ben and Nick had perhaps not produced their best tennis on the night, the season saw highs for both and lasting memories for supporters.

Division 1

Peter Wright sent shockwaves through the division in the very first match, beating Paul Knox of Radley 6-0 6-1. With David Harms then taking care of Matty Ronaldson, RTC2 had upset a very strong outfit. Home wins over Petworth and Oxford left RTC2 in second place in the four-team division. The final, at Radley, was yet to take place as the newsletter went to press.

Division 2

RTC3 featured a rotation policy, with any two from Stef King, David Watson and Simon Barker turning out in most matches. The result was highly successful, with Stef in particular picking up some overwhelming wins as RTC established themselves on top of the pile. The final was also yet to be played as we went to press.

Division 5

Bernard Weatherill's team had mixed fortunes, but there were successes, including a 3-0 win over a strong Prested Hall side. Fourth place left them one spot away from an eliminator final.

Division 7

RTC6 were unbeaten at home but all too fallible on their travels as they just missed out on the semi-finals in the league's largest division.

Division 8

Despite some sterling performances from the improving Chris Gotla, there were too many narrow defeats for Owen Saunders' team to push for a place in the semi-finals.

Division 6

Captain David Blizzard on a title-winning season

The core of the title-winning Division 6 team was Charles Ashbourne, David Blizzard and Fred Satow, although four other members (Wayne Beglan, Richard De Caux, Tom Freeman, and Mike Raitt) played one match, and all four won.

Charles was the star performer for RTC5, winning all bar one of his matches and earning the prize – a

Maurice Lacroix timepiece – for the most valuable player in the division.

The only defeat for RTC came in the first match of the season, a 2-1 loss at Oxford. The result was reversed when Oxford visited Hampton Court.

RTC were top of the league after the round-robin phase, resulting in a home draw for the semi-final against Canford, which RTC won 3-0. David and Charles had secured the place in the final before Fred stepped on to court for a thrilling final match, in which he beat Dugald Lockhart 2/6, 6/3, 6/5.

In the final against Middlesex, the

first rubber saw David come through 6/2, 6/4 over Robert Dickinson. After a somewhat nervous start David put in a very solid performance, relying more on his opponents' errors rather than hitting outright winners.

In the second rubber Charles exceeded the high expectations on the division's MVP by beating Aldona Greenwood 6/0, 6/2, using his railroad serve to good effect and spending little time at the Hazard end. Although Fred Satow then lost a high-quality No 1 rubber against Johnny Beale by 4/6, 3/6, RTC were still deserving champions.

NATIONAL LEAGUE TABLES

PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	Pts
MURTC 1	8	5	36
Queen's 1	8	4	31
RTC 1	8	4	27
Seacourt 1	8	3	24
MCC 1	8	4	22

Eliminator: RTC 1 beat Queen's 1 2/1

Final: MURTC 1 beat RTC 1 2/1

DIVISION 1

Radley 1	6	4	30
RTC 2	6	4	24
Oxford 1	6	3	21
Petworth 1	6	1	9

DIVISION 2

RTC 3	8	6	41
Cambridge 1	8	5	36
Hatfield/MURTC	8	6	36
Petworth 2	8	3	24
Seacourt 2	8	3	22
Holyport 1	8	3	21
Canford 1	8	2	16

DIVISION 5

Canford 2	8	7	41
Oratory 2	8	7	41
Prested Hall 2	8	5	37
RTC 4	8	4	28
Oxford 3	8	2	22
Petworth 3	8	1	15
Moreton Morrell 2	8	2	12

DIVISION 6

RTC 5	8	7	45
Cambridge 6	8	6	36
MURTC 2	8	6	36
Canford 3	8	5	33
Oxford 4	8	4	30
MCC 3	8	4	28
Cambridge 5	8	0	10
Oratory 3	8	0	6

Semi-finals: MURTC 2 beat Cambridge 6 3/0; RTC 5 beat Canford 3 3/0

Final: RTC 5 beat MURTC 2 2/1

DIVISION 7

Oxford 5	8	7	41
MURTC 3	8	5	35
Radley 2	8	5	33
Prested Hall 3	8	4	32
RTC 6	8	5	31
MCC 4	8	3	27
Oratory 4	8	3	25
Newmarket 1	8	3	21
Holyport 2	8	2	18
Hatfield 2	8	3	17

DIVISION 8

Canford 4	8	7	43
Moreton Morrell 3	8	4	34
Petworth 4	8	4	30
Prested Hall 4	8	4	26
Oxford 6	8	4	26
Queens 4	8	4	26
RTC 7	8	3	25
Oratory 5	8	2	14

The surfing gallery

The past nine months have seen pioneers around the globe explore new ways of enabling more of us to see top-class tennis



Photograph by Michael Do

As Nick Wood and Ben Matthews were competing in the National League final at the Queen's Club, work was continuing outside on the 6,500 Centre Court seats in readiness for the Aegon Championships (formerly the Stella Artois). Similar preparations will have been going on at the All England Club, with Wimbledon able to cater for 40,000 spectators on each day.

Of course, such numbers are hardly relevant to real tennis, but even so we know that there are many players and followers who would like to see the top players in action – far more than the 70 or so who could squeeze around the court at Queen's. The next best thing is watching on a screen at home. In the absence of a huge bid from Sky for TV broadcast rights, several competitions are now instead being 'streamed' (ie broadcast) live on the Worldwide Web, with variable degrees of success.

Rob Fahey's recent world title defence was streamed around the world from Melbourne, the picture coming from a webcam high above the service end (see www.ustream.tv/recorded/6666292). While it was wonderful to be able to watch a historic achievement – and any opportunity to see Fahey play should be grasped – the distant camera position and the limited upload speed of the connection in Melbourne made for a rather jumpy picture and a few sound problems.

The good news is that, as broadband speeds improve, web streaming will become better in quality, more reliable and available to more people. The final world eliminator in March, between Steve Virgona and Camden Riviere at Tuxedo Park, offered the best example so far of what can be done, with an excellent picture from the dedans and laconic ball-by-ball commentary from the Washington-based English

professional Phil Shannon (see www.ustream.tv/recorded/5590202). Every single point of that three-day classic was an absolute delight.

The web has seen plenty more live streaming recently, including the National League final, the 'Real Ten' event at Prested Hall and the Cherry Blossom doubles at the Prince's Court in Washington (pictured above), where they went one step further and ambitiously broadcast in 3D (www.ustream.tv/recorded/6119459).

Of course, nothing quite matches the thrill of watching an event in 'real time', in person or on a TV or computer, but while we wait for faster connections there is another option for the tennis addict: high-definition video that can be edited and published on the internet at a more leisurely pace after the event.

Those of you who have come along to watch the professionals will know that David Glover is a regular presence in a corner of the dedans, accumulating an impressive archive of material, and he is often joined by our website editor Martin Daly, filming with a mobile-phone-sized 'Flip' camcorder. The result is far, far clearer than any webcam could achieve – just see for yourself at www.royaltenniscourt.com/category/videos. Martin is also planning to experiment with streaming at RTC soon, in order to see whether the club's current internet connection is up to the job.

Technology may still be limiting the efforts of everyone aiming to bring top-class tennis to the wider world, but the benefits are obvious: those of us who are already hooked can indulge in our passion, while decent-quality streaming should also attract new fans of the sport. If the streams can be effectively marketed, then events will also become more attractive to potential sponsors.

Simon Edmond

Visiting Manchester are roasted

Owen Saunders reports on two lively social matches from the spring

First up in March's social match with Manchester was Robert Frost versus Jamie Bebb. Frost's unorthodox hitting surprised Bebb, who clearly learned from the Ronaldson school of classical stroke play. If Brazil played real tennis, they'd play like Robert Frost. *RTC 8-4.*

Keith Smith's main weapon is that his opponent doesn't realise until it's too late that he doesn't run. Tiff Fielden struggled with the big handicap, and with the game poised at 4-4, Smith unleashed his chopped backhand drop serve, which duly fell stone dead in the corner. *RTC 6-4.*

In the first doubles, Manchester fielded a newcomer who was no match for the wily Carew-Hunt/Mulcahy pairing. During the game the skipper set off the kitchen fire alarm due to over

eagerness with roast potatoes, but it takes more than that to put Carew-Hunt and Mulcahy off their stroke. *RTC 8-3.*

The Manchester captain and Fraser Shorey realised they had been at university together, but after genial reminiscences Shorey put emotion to one side and dispatched his opponent. Behind that cheerful, bespectacled exterior beats the heart of a ruthless competitor. *RTC 8-3.*

Apparently Carew-Hunt beat Richard Dyson, but I was busy showing the palace guards my roast potatoes and claiming the fire alarm was too sensitive. They disagreed. *RTC 8-5.*

Saunders and Smith took on Fielden and Howe, and the combination of Smith's strokeplay and Saunders' retrieving proved decisive and they never looked like losing. *RTC 8-3.*

When Dr Mulcahy started hurling himself around court like a 20-year-old, we were worried we might have to see if there were any (other) doctors in the house. *RTC 7-5.*

Saunders played a solid, unspectacular game against Howe, winning 8-3. Rumours that Saunders substituted in doppelganger Shorey to play in order to improve the team's chances of winning are unfounded.

In the finale, Frost and Shorey took on Bebb and Mossford and completed the whitewash with a rousing 8-3 victory, with Frost continuing to frustrate the chuntering Bebb with his circus entertainment brand of tennis.

So, a convincing win for RTC. Manchester were good sports and enjoyed their day, the score ultimately flattering RTC.

Frost and Blizzard extinguish Jesters' fire

In May, Corin Jenkins gathered together his band of itinerant Jesters at Hampton Court for the annual match against the RTC. The Jesters came with a strong side including RTC turncoats Patrick Jenkins and Paul Heaver, as well as ladies' world No 4 Frederika Adam.

Showing the respect they hold for the Jesters, RTC wheeled out the doubles experts - Oliver Buckley and Nick Carew-Hunt - as well as the fiercely competitive trio of Bernard Weatherill,

David Blizzard and Robert Frost. Disappointingly the skipper chose not to field the amusingly named Frost/Blizzard doubles pairing.

(Note to future match managers: can we get Brian Rich and Michael Banks to form a topical Rich/Banks doubles pair; or maybe David Best and Stephen Price could form the Best/Price partnership?)

Unfortunately the exact scores are lost to the sands of time, but RTC won convincingly.

Highlights included an epic encounter between Weatherill and Brind, with Weatherill squeaking home, and Adam fighting back from 0-6 down to draw 7-7 with Frost.

In the doubles, Buckley and Blizzard were ruthless, and Bruce Leith and Simon Edmond played no nonsense doubles tennis to secure victories.

After a thoroughly competitive match RTC won 6½-2½. Or maybe it was 7-2. Or it could have been 6-3. Oh, it doesn't really matter, does it?

They know where you live...

This photograph was taken by Murray Glover at the end of our previous "stuffing session", during which the newsletters are addressed and sent out. The dramatis personae are... back row, left to right: Murray, Chris Winn, David Glover, "Wizzy" Mason (who was passing and kindly offered to lend a hand) and John Partridge. Front row are the Beast, between two of three triplets (Florence Hepburn on my left and Christine on my right - or is it the other way round?). The only missing "regular" is Tom Kendall. The stuffing normally takes place on a Saturday; if it's on a different day,



Christopher Lyster is another member of the team. **David Seelig**

A MESSAGE FROM BEN MATTHEWS

A quick thank you to everybody who generously contributed to a fund handed over to me on my departure from the Royal Tennis Court. I have a list of contributors to the fund so I know who you all are, and your support is very much appreciated.

France is warm and relaxing, and I even saw a couple of RTC regulars, David Watson and Richard Harris, for the Kressman Trophy, so thank you for coming and supporting the event.

I hope that RTC is running as smoothly as ever and that you are looking forward to the arrival of your new Australian professional.

Elementary my dear Watsons

Father and son combine to take the Harris-Watson doubles title

A year after just coming up short with his daughter Clare in the final of the Harris-Watson Trophy, David Watson was back this spring for another family assault, this time with his son James. Their opponents in the final were the same duo who foiled David and Clare last year, Dave Harms and David Durham, but this time the Watsons prevailed in a three-set struggle.

The final was the second titanic battle of the weekend for Harms and Durham, who had to produce their best to defeat the intriguing combination of Simon Barker and improving newcomer Tom Freeman in their semi-final.

Congratulations to Watson & Watson - we await next year's family selection meeting keenly...



Photograph by David Glover

David's Durham, Watson and Harms and James Watson

Wood's Words

Head professional Nick Wood on how to make the court work for you

USEFUL AREAS OF THE COURT

SERVICE END
Low net at centre
Corners
Floor Chases
Service Galleries
Dedans

RECEIVER'S END
Hazard End floor (green area)
Low net at centre
Corners
Tambour
Grille
Winning gallery
Hazard galleries

As you can see above, the majority of useful features benefit the player at the service end, hence the advantage of being there. However, the most important shot in the game is the return of serve. The service must run along the penthouse, providing the first opportunity to the player receiving.

Firstly, the low part of the net. This doesn't mean you can play your shot lower, but it does mean you have more net clearance. If the service keeps you tight to the side wall then play to the main wall side of the court, and if the service pushes you wide to the middle of the court, then play to the gallery side. In both cases, make sure the second bounce stays in the corner.

If the opportunity arises, a shot to the service galleries is your next best option. Creating a chase may not win you a point outright, but it will increase your chances of winning the point once you have changed ends. This can be true, even of hazard chases. By creating a chase/hazard chase, on changing ends, whether it be the service or receiver's end, all the floor area and the galleries

on the other side now become winning targets – the galleries are a huge area to aim for, and one that is incredibly difficult for your opponent to defend. A shot for the dedans should be avoided unless you are attacking a short chase or have practised for many hours.

Once at the service end, more useful features are available to you. The floor area beyond the hazard chases is where most points are won. Use the low part of the net to maximise net clearance and to find the corners. If hitting cross-court to the tambour corner is an option, aim to land the second bounce in the corner – if the ball hits the tambour, excellent, and if the ball misses the tambour, excellent! There is no need to force the pace on this shot as it will only increase the chance of your opponent retrieving it.

Avoid going for targets (unless the practice hours have been put in), as this is where most opportunities are given.

Remember, chases are one of the features that separate this game from all others; they are part of the game, so use them.

Cockram Cup

David Watson and Bernard Weatherill represented Great Britain in the world masters over-50s team event against Australia and the USA for the Cockram Cup, played at MCC. The format for the Cockram Cup is similar to the Field Trophy, with teams of seven from each country playing three singles and two doubles.

David had the honour of being the GB No 1 singles player, and Bernard captained the GB team and played in the 2nd doubles (with Mark Nicholls of Prested Hall). For Bernard this was his 5th and final Cockram match, because he will (if selected) join the ranks of the over-60s when the next series takes place in Melbourne in 2012.

The GB Team defeated Australia by 4/1, and the USA by 5/0, with David facing Mike Happell (handicap: +1.7) in the Australia match. David lost the first set 6/0, but magnificently he snatched the second 6/4 and led in the third by 1/0 before Happell reasserted himself. David did himself great honour to have taken a set from a player whose handicap was 12.8 handicap points better. David went on to beat Bruce Manson, the USA No 1 (and a good enough lawn tennis player once to reach the men's doubles semi-final at Wimbledon) by 6/5, 6/0.

Bernard and his partner played the third and fifth best Australians, who had markedly lower doubles handicaps. Well beaten in the first set, Bernard and Mark survived three match points in the second and squeezed out a highly satisfying win in the third, 2/6, 6/5, 6/3 after 2¼ hours. They also beat the USA second pair 6/3, 6/5.

A new member writes

John Priestland reflects on the welcome he received after discovering real tennis and joining RTC last year

The celebrated humourist, Miles Kington, suggested that he should write a book entitled *A Hundred Things to Do Before You Die*. Kington's list included learning to whistle loudly and pronouncing "chorizo" properly. In the summer of 2009, I came up with my own list, which included playing real tennis.

I thoroughly expected this to be an impossible challenge. Real tennis would be stuffy and elitist, wouldn't it? The great and the good wouldn't want to let ordinary members of the public play, would they? I couldn't have been more wrong.

I sent an email to Nick Wood and within a few hours I got the most warm and encouraging reply back. Yes, of course I could come and have a coaching session with him, racquet and everything provided.

Needless to say I was hooked the moment I hit my first ball. Nine months on I continue to be fascinated by the game and feel like a RTC old-timer. But I am still new enough to remember how important it was that the club was so welcoming. The way new and prospective members are treated says a great deal about a club. Are members pleased to see a new face, or are they an intrusion into the clique?

It is daunting being new: there are new rules and conventions to be observed and different people to get to know. I would like to thank all my early opponents for being understanding when I forgot to look where the ball landed and failed to call chases; or when I repeatedly got the



Fresh blood: John Priestland

score wrong. There are all sorts of unwritten conventions as well – for example, letting the non-server come round the net first – and again people were forgiving and helpful. And not too many people laughed at me when I played shots that, had I left, I would have won the chase!

The most difficult thing I found about joining the club was actually how to get in and out. Now all this is obvious, but it's not when you're new.

I made the point at the AGM that I was very grateful to have been made to feel so welcome. Several people came up to me afterwards and said how pleased they were to hear this observation; they also noted that not all clubs are like this. And we all have a responsibility to continue this tradition, because we all may meet new members at formative stages of their tennis careers.

So, only 99 more things to do before I die. The only trouble is that I'm enjoying real tennis so much, I'm not sure I'll get round to many of them. Thank you, RTC!

RTC Top Ten

Leading handicaps
May 2010

1	Peter Wright	2.8
2=	Dave Harms	6.2
2=	Robert Hird	6.2
4	David Watson	11.1
5	Marcus Ward	12.2
6	Simon Barker	13.1
7	James Watson	15.6
8	James Sohl	16.1
9	Nick Hatchett	16.3
10	Mike Bray	18.1

The Royal Tennis Court Newsletter

is published four times a year and the editor would love any contributions from members. Please get in touch if you have any ideas for the autumn issue, via the professionals or by email at the address below.

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NON-RTC NEWS

☛ **Claire Vigrass** has had an astonishing season, winning several titles and lowering her handicap to 7.9, the lowest ever achieved by a woman. Most remarkable of all was the 18-year-old's success over the men in the T&RA Under-21 Open Singles. Claire is currently on a year-long scholarship at Lord's.

☛ The Tennis & Rackets Association has appointed **Chris Davies** as its new CEO and secretary. Chris started on 1 June and will work alongside James Walton for two months before the latter's retirement on 31 July.

RESULTS

Barker-Camm Cup

Semi-finals: Simon Barker beat Karen Hird 6/1 6/0; David Watson beat James Watson 6/4 6/1.

Final: Barker beat Watson 6/4 1/6 6/4.

Harris-Watson Trophy

Semi-finals: Dave Harms & David Durham beat Simon Barker & Tom Freeman 3/6 6/4 6/2; David Watson & James Watson beat Karen Hird & James Sohl 6/3 6/2.

Final: Watson & Watson beat Harms & Durham 6/1 4/6 6/2.

Spring Night Pennant Final

Carew-Hunt (sub)/Callaghan/Smith (The Twickenham Baptist Gang) beat Drew/Price/Pearce (The Sin Binned), 9/4

Singles: Nick Carew-Hunt beat Dorian Drew 6/3; Dan Callaghan beat Stephen Price 6/3; Keith Smith beat Simon Pearce 6/1.

Doubles: Carew Hunt & Callaghan beat Drew/Price 6/1; Carew Hunt & Smith lost to Drew & Pearce 5/6; Callaghan & Smith beat Price & Pearce 6/3.



Nick Carew-Hunt, Keith Smith and Dan Callaghan

Lathom-Browne Cup

Grade winners so far

Grade A: **Simon Edmond**

Grade B: Paul Wright or Adrian Hughes

Grade C: **Fraser Shorey**

Grade D: Stephen Goss, Julian

Sheraton-Davis or David Jeffcoate

Grade E: **John Halliday**

Grade F: Terry Marsh or Elvira Campione

Grade G: **Dorian Drew**

Grade H: **John Traversi**