



Niagara Tennis News

Stories, reports and ideas about Tennis in Niagara-on-the-Lake and beyond.

October 6 2012

Hello Tennis Friends!

This edition contains news of the Club Singles Tournaments, the final events for Ladies Night and for Mixed Doubles Night, an Inter-club Match, and other bits and pieces. But first, we wish you a very Happy Thanksgiving, and hope you count Tennis among your many blessings this weekend. Here's some food for thought as you consider all for which we can be truly thankful ...

October Reflections

The end of a season is always a great time to reflect on all the good things that have happened over the past months, and also to look ahead to what might make things better next year. The Club really needs everyone to pull together on this latter task : it's impossible for a few volunteers to try to anticipate the needs of 250 various adult players. "Talk to us - please!" is their message of the day to each and every one of us.

Consider for a moment how much more challenging it is to manage a Tennis Club compared to a team sport. For team sports, the organizers gather together to assign players to teams, then make a schedule of games. The games lead to a series of playoffs, and everyone expects to attend a yearend party for all the players on all the teams. Everyone is included on the same basis, and everyone pays a substantial fee to cover the costs of facility rental, officials, prizes and that yearend party.

Tennis is much more varied, and thus a great deal more complex. Games are arranged among small groups, ideally repeated on a weekly basis. Unless the players participate in many open club activities, they tend to make the acquaintance of only a small circle of fellow members (as few as half a dozen, or as many as 20-30). Players measure their tennis experience from this narrow vantage point, with little or no knowledge and understanding of other club members. More than that, they often find little reason to think about other members ... or assume that other members have little reason to think about them.

And then there's the notion that "The Club" knows all, has responsibility for all, and will meet everyone's needs by deploying infinite wisdom and resources. How often have you heard sentences starting with the phrase "The Club should"? The reality is that "The Club" is folks like the rest of us ... folks who would be only too happy to relinquish the responsibility and just play tennis.

Those folks have worked for countless hours over the years to put in place some programs and systems designed to create satisfying tennis experiences for all the varied members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club. How they'd love to put us all on teams, give us a game schedule and a team shirt, and turn us loose!



But it doesn't work that way. In our sport, blocks of time are set aside for various games, gradually assembling a patchwork quilt schedule to which players can look and say "There's my weekly tennis game : one I know I can enjoy on a regular basis ... one in which I'll play with familiar friends and hope to meet a few new ones over the course of the season ... one in which I can get some exercise, have some fun, and perhaps improve my tennis."

So job one is the challenge of having enough of those opportunities that each member can see one game a week. We can accommodate at most 16 players at a time on four courts, with 90 minutes being seen as a minimum playing time for a doubles game. Thus, many blocks are needed if we're to provide for more than 250 members.

But even if we could achieve that goal, it would never be seen as sufficient. Many members expect to play more than once each week, and many players are hoping to have a variety of games and opportunities to meet other members. The answer to this need is activities such as Club Nights, open events such as Opening Day and Club Tournaments, and Player Clinics led by qualified coaches.

Because of wide variations in the levels of playing expertise and experience, each of these activities requires careful management in order for all members to feel welcome and for there to be an expectation of a pleasant occasion. And we haven't even spoken of the challenge of inviting new players to the game of tennis, providing them with instruction and playing experiences until their standard reaches club level ... nor of our fervent wish to see many more young people playing tennis.

Beyond all these games, many players of all levels are desirous of practice opportunities, whether on their own time or in a guided fashion as part of a group. A group dynamic always creates extra energy and spurs us on beyond what we might do on our own. That "open green time" on the court availability schedule isn't nearly as inviting as a "Group Practice Session" with a ball machine on one court, full-court drills on a second court, mini-tennis and volley practice on a third court, and serves/returns on a fourth court ... all with support available in the form of modified equipment and learning aids ... either with mentors or with coaches. And it would be made all the better if the canteen was open, offering sandwiches and cookies, lemonade and coffee.

Each and every aspect requires hands-on organization and effort ... lots of it ... on a continuing basis. Keeping those tennis courts filled for as many hours a week as we do, and for as many weeks of the year as we do, is a major accomplishment. It's appropriate to celebrate our achievement as we conclude our 42nd season, but the focus is also on 2013. Now is the time to say "let's try this" or "can we do that". If we don't speak up, our thoughts and our hopes will be lost.

What would you like to see at the Tennis Club next season that would make it even better for you than the 2012 season has been? Let your voice be heard ... your Directors are listening ...

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WE ARE A
COMMUNITY



Congratulations to our Singles Champions!

Don Pozojevic has recorded the first Triple Crown in club history, defeating Roman Korda to win the Gerald & Carole Kanter's Trophy, and capping off a great season in which he won the Mixed Doubles with Nancy Berkhout and the Men's Doubles with Hugh Dow. Don also won both the Men's Doubles and the Mixed Doubles in the Niagara Peninsula 55+ Championships. This is his second time as our Men's Singles champion, having won in 2010 as well.

Our new Women's Singles champion is **Fran Doran**, who defeated Susan Flight to earn The Rive WorkRoom Trophy. Fran and her husband Gerry are new to Niagara-on-the-Lake, having relocated to St David's earlier this year. They have spent their summers at Southampton for many years, enjoying that legendary community club during the months of July and August. Fran is an experienced and keen competitor, and we look forward to seeing her in many more club events in years to come.

Thanks to photographer Terry Belleville for being the sports journalist of record for these events.



Roman Korda and Don Pozojevic



Fran Doran and Susan Flight



Patrons of our Singles Trophies

Gerry Kanter was club president in 1982, while Carole was president in both 1992 and 1993.

Judy Rive was Women's Singles champion in 1981 and also served for many years as a club volunteer.

They have always been passionate supporters of Tennis in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We thank them for their encouragement and inspiration.



The Men's B Singles competition, for the Niagara Battery & Tire Trophy, is yet to be completed. After a series of preliminary matches, the only two undefeated players are Scott McGregor and Wayne Vent. They had reached a score of 3-3 in their first set on Wednesday evening when Scott asked for a suspension of play because his glasses were fogging in the unusual conditions. The interruption was graciously accommodated by his fellow competitor. The match will be resumed at the first opportunity.

Grand Finale for Ladies Night

It was a beautiful evening on September 12th when the players gathered for the final official event of Ladies Night for the 2012 season. As always, there were 32 players organized into two shifts, with a break between for a potluck dinner and socializing.

The players took advantage of the occasion to express their thanks to Liz Vinassac and Kay Ashwood, who have done a brilliant job of making this the club's most popular and successful program.

A total of 54 members registered for Ladies Night, either as regulars or as spares, making it a highlight of the week for many.

Special thanks and a warm welcome to Sue Werner, who has generously offered to help Kay with the week to week operations next season.



Liz Vinassac, Marilyn Francis and Kay Ashwood



Thanks to all the players for helping to make Ladies Night socials such memorable events. Janice Schachtschneider and Helen Ferley are regulars in the 7:30 game.



These beautiful faces express the spirit of Ladies Night perfectly. From the left: Brenda Parks, Amy Weiner, and Margaret Hobbs-Mancuso.

Many thanks to Deb Robert for lovely photography.

Celebration for Friday Nights

September 23rd concluded 16 weeks of organized tennis at the Club on Friday Nights. The season started with great enthusiasm in June, with 32 players making Friday Night their regular night of tennis. Over the summer we have had lots of wonderful evenings in the pavilion enjoying a beverage and snacks after the matches.

The season was scattered with some special social evenings to remind us of the theme of the group : social tennis. June was a Pizza Party in the pavilion; July was a house party after tennis; and in September we ended the season with another house party.

Each month a new roster of players was introduced. Some became "regulars" for the season and some were just available to commit for one specific month. And then we had the healthy list of "spares" that any team captain knows is a must if you are committed to filling 4 courts with 32 players every week.

Through the season we had over 60 members introduced to the evening, whether it was for one night as a spare



or for 16 weeks as a regular player.

A \$5 contribution to a Social Fund was collected from players each month to offset the cost of new balls and provided a kitty for organizers to work with for special social events. Because of the great "everyone pitch in" attitude of the group, we ended the season with a surplus of \$240. This has been donated to the Club to begin a Social Fund for future expenditures to further improve our pavilion and the social experience there.

The players expressed their appreciation to Marilyn Francis, the Group Captain, by presenting her with a lovely thank you gift at the end of season. Organizing any group takes some extra time and energy, but most people who step up to the plate will find that this is rewarded many times over through new experiences and friendships.

An extra special thanks goes to Carman Bowron, Jackie Donnelly & Dorothy Booth for their help in organizing our special social events through the summer.

Inter-Club Match with Welland TC

On Sunday, September 16th we hosted the Welland Tennis Club to a social-competitive series of matches at our Club. Terry and Marilyn Francis, Scott McGregor, Dorothy Booth, Flory Massi, Mary Pohorly, Gary Inkster and Lil Cohen represented Niagara-on-the-Lake.

What a great way to spend a late Sunday morning! Coffee, muffins & fruit were served as players arrived. The format was set: three rounds of play, two of regular doubles and one of mixed doubles. 8 players from each team, 4 women and 4 men.

The first round of doubles finished with Niagara ahead with a strong lead of 22 games to Welland's 13 games. But perhaps Welland was just getting used to our omni-turf surface.

Welland had the edge in mixed doubles, finishing with 20 games to Niagara's 19. While Niagara was still in the overall lead, we needed to make sure the momentum wasn't shifting.

After another round of doubles, Niagara was back firmly in the lead with 40 games to Welland's 26. While the play was competitive, the atmosphere was definitely social. We celebrated with a glass of mimosa, quiche, salad and fruit.

A special thanks to **Ravine Bistro Restaurant** for generously sponsoring our event. The quiche was amazing! And the sign of a great event was the call from the Welland Club to ask when we can schedule this again for next year! A definite for Niagara's 2013 Calendar of Events.



Thanks to Tady Saczkowski for the photograph!

Anyone else interested in organizing an Inter Club event for next year with Grimsby or Fort Erie? All it takes is one person to step up to be the co-ordinator. No experience necessary, just a willingness to pull a team together and work with the other Club to make the event what you want it to be.

Seen and heard ... around and about



The Captains of our Regular Games are the unsung heroes of the Club. Pete Unger has been organizing a game on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for many years. Among the happy players with Pete last week were (left) Will Wilson and Phil Landray.

A somewhat more exuberant tone was struck by the players (below) who gathered to thank Captains Pat Young and Lil Cohen for their Regular Games of Monday and Friday mornings. These Red Hot Mamas are already excited about next season's games.

Thanks, and congratulations, to all our Captains :

Pete Unger, Pat Young, Lil Cohen, Brenda Parks, Jim Mergelas, Otto Werner, Marion Briston, Deb Robert, Estelle Simons, Dominic Ventresca and Terry Francis.

Together the Captains provided memorable tennis for 28 courts each week ... that's 112 player spots, including as many as 150 players when the spares are accounted for.



We love having visitors from out of town on our courts! As we've said often before, the number of tourists travelling with their tennis gear continues to grow. It's fun for locals to play with players from faraway places, and it's a great experience for tourists to add tennis to their Niagara-on-the-Lake memories.

Ken Smith (far left) is a local who has been in the right place at the right time lately. A couple of weeks ago, he helped two visitors from Boston by lending one of them a racquet. "They were very solid players, at least 4.0+."

And yesterday, he obliged Derm Penney, a delightful visitor from Newfoundland. Derm and his wife come to Niagara-on-the-Lake every year for the Shaw Festival, but this is the first time he's come looking for Tennis as well. After a nice hit with Ken, we're betting he'll be back for more next summer!



Say hello to Bethany Poltl, a beautiful 9 year old who loves to play tennis. Her mother, Heidi-Ann, has great memories of her own childhood in Niagara-on-the-Lake. "My brother and I rode our bikes to Memorial Park for swimming in the morning, then we'd move over to the tennis courts for the afternoon. Alan & Vera Wilcox organized games and gave us lessons. All the kids loved it."

Times have changed, however. Bethany joins other keen juniors from Niagara-on-the-Lake who travel to centers such as Welland, Vineland and Burlington for their programs.

We hope to have sufficient facilities and programs to keep them here before too long.



Thursday afternoon's gusty winds came swooping across the empty swimming pool and whipped the windscreen at the end of court 4. As they are designed to do, the zipties broke free, ensuring there was no undue stress placed on the fence.

That was a signal to pack the screen away for the winter season. Flory Massi is mobilizing a volunteer work party to take down the remaining screens on Saturday morning, October 13th. Drop him a note at florymassi@cogeco.ca if you can give some time to the effort.

*Thanks to Lynne McKay,
Susan Browne,
and Linda Telford
for help putting this
windscreen
to bed for the winter.*





Last summer, our club roster was graced by the names of Johannes and Elisabeth Lackner, who were here from Austria for a job assignment on the tunnel project in Niagara Falls.

They brought with them the spirit of community tennis in Europe and were immensely popular in all our club programs.

Now on assignment for a project nearer to home, Hannes and Elisabeth found a way to join Rosemary and Don Goodwin for a typical Austrian dinner in Vienna last week.

Warm greetings are sent to all their friends here. They hope to return to Niagara for a visit before next spring.

Cable companies are doing well by Tennis fans, as we'll pay the extra fees needed to access SportsnetOne in order to see great tennis matches being played all over the globe.

Last night's semi-final in Tokyo started at 11:00pm EST, and the final tonight is slated for 1:00am EST. Set your DVR! This is the report from Tennis Canada's Facebook page:

Playing in his fifth semifinal of the season, Milos Raonic (Thornhill, ON) saved two match points en route to a dramatic 6-3, 6-7(5), 7-6(4) victory over world no. 3 Andy Murray of Great Britain to reach his fourth final of 2012.

This is Raonic's second win over Murray this season after defeating him on clay in Barcelona this spring. In addition, for the second consecutive match in Tokyo, Raonic defeated a Top 10 player in a third set tiebreaker after defeating Janko Tipsarevic in the quarter-finals on Friday where he also saved a match point.

Milos Raonic is the new face of Canadian Tennis



From her home base at the National Training Centre in Montreal, **Charlotte Petrick** has been on the road gaining valuable tournament experience. In the past two weeks, she played in WTA 10k events in Florida, one in Amelia Island and the other in Gainesville ... reaching the doubles quarter-finals in both and competing in tough singles matches in both. Now she moves on to Tulsa, Oklahoma for the ITF Pan American Junior Championships. She's #20 on the player acceptance list for what will be a 64-player draw in girls singles.

Along with Francoise Abanda, Charlotte is the youngest of the 16 Canadian women on the WTA rankings list. She holds position #1164 among all women players in the world (#813 in doubles) ... perhaps a similar position to what Milos Raonic held at her age. She'll be hoping to improve on her #281 world junior ranking in Tulsa next week.

Expressions of disappointment poured in once word spread that the Tennis Ball had been postponed to next year.

Organizers had high hopes for a lovely evening at the Sailing Club, but not enough of us had purchased our tickets by the time a go-or-no decision had to be made.

With such a lot of work being needed to present such an event, it's hoped we can have systems in place to distribute tickets earlier and easier next season.



A meeting of the Directors of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club is scheduled to be held at the Community Centre on Friday October 12 at 5:00.

A new website for the Club is under development, but you can still find all sorts of information at

www.tennisniagara.com

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They say there's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It was a beautiful arc over our courts not long ago, perhaps foretelling better things to come for our Tennis Centre.

It's already better than it was a year ago, and thanks are due, yet again, to Richard Berti and the other volunteers who gifted us with the pavilion improvements we've now come to take for granted.

Thanks to all who made the 2012 season such a beautiful and memorable one for all of us.

Best regards,
Rosemary Goodwin

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