



TENNIS WESTERN B.O.P (Inc)

ANNUAL REPORT AUGUST 2021



I am pleased to present the 2020/2021 Annual Report on the activities of Tennis Western BOP.

It has been a challenging year with the post-covid changes and the threat of another potential outbreak only one aircraft passenger away. It is fortunate that we have tennis as an accessible sport that gives us all a chance to enjoy hitting balls and to think about volleys rather than inoculations. The performance of Venus and Daniel at the Olympics has to be uplifting, not only for us as clubs but perhaps nationally in the form of a boost in funding from Sport NZ. Wow.

The primary objectives of Tennis WBOP are to:

- provide organisational excellence, promote and support clubs and their membership, promote game development and protect and grow Tennis WBOP assets
- promote, develop and advance the sport of tennis by providing access to facilities and services to members by supporting affiliated clubs and their programmes.

There are three levels at which Tennis WBOP works to achieve these objectives: nationally, regionally and locally.

Nationally, the last 12 months has seen a growth of engagement with Tennis NZ (TNZ). This has primarily been at the instigation of TNZ which has reviewed and revised its approach to its responsibilities. One look at the TNZ website shows its corporate face and its stated desire to have closer and better relationships with the regions and clubs. Its stated intention is to develop a charter of services to which all regions subscribe and which defines how each region will deliver against agreed national initiatives such as coaching programmes, player databases, coach registers and communication formats.

It has certainly placed an emphasis on face-to-face communication: its senior managers met with the Tennis WBOP Executive in 2020, its full board with the Waikato Bays' Presidents at the Rose Bowl in Rotorua and there is a scheduled meeting between the CEO / Head of Participation and the Tennis WBOP Executive in Tauranga later this month. Most of these discussions are centred on agreeing on how best to merge resources and actions to increase player participation. At the same time there has been a targeted growth of electronic services, especially the rollout of Club Spark, that TNZ is keen to establish as the core of all national and regional competitions. Having the TNZ Coach based in Whakatane has also enabled Tennis WBOP to have his skills and advice accessed more easily. Love Tennis is another example of a Central Region recruitment campaign that TNZ has chosen to expand nationally with some resourcing.

There are still aspects of the relationship with TNZ to be worked through, especially the reduction of national and regional competitions (see Waikato Bays below) and in the 10 Point Plan, particularly the potential changes to the affiliation fees structure. To its credit, TNZ does provide a series of national forums for regional leaders to discuss differences at and to find solutions where possible. Tennis WBOP did seek to have a voice in the upcoming forum about affiliation fees but it has not been successful.

Regional

Waikato Bays, (Tennis WBOP / Tennis BOP/ Tennis Eastern / Tennis Waikato) is the vehicle of regional cooperation. While junior and senior competitions like the Rose Bowl, the TNZ Awards and the junior inter-regionals are examples of this, there are zoom meetings between the presidents to collaborate and discuss common issues. The current president of this group is Sarah Shand from Napier, and the president in 2022 will come from Tennis WBOP. It is fair to say that Waikato Bays activities have been low-key in the last 12 months with meetings only happening when an issue or event

arose. Waikato-Bays does, however, have the potential to deliver more for the region. As Tennis NZ has now dropped national competitions for the Under 16 and Under 18 age groups, there is a gap in the pathway for aspiring junior players. One option is for Waikato Bays to establish tournaments that it supports and runs. This is already underway with training camps and tagged tournaments at junior level but another Rose Bowl style event for a designated age group might work. Either way, Waikato Bays would have to resource these events as TNZ has made it clear that it will not even provide logistical support.

Oddly, TNZ sees the Waikato Bays structure as a model for the rest of the country to follow, and it was a discussion topic for the TNZ visit to Rotorua. The short answer is that Waikato Bays works on trust.

Local

Club tennis continues to be strong throughout the Tennis WBOP area. One indicator is membership growth: since 2017 there has been a steady rise in the total number of registered players with a 4/7% increase across the board since 2020. While all clubs have their ups and downs in membership, it is encouraging to see that the smaller clubs are also growing steadily and that no club is under threat of closure. While the *Love Tennis* campaign was supported by a majority of clubs this season, many clubs also deliver strong recruitment programmes. Facilities continue to improve with clubhouse upgrades and the relaying of courts. Informal comments from visiting players and parents support the view that our area has many advantages for tennis players. Another indicator is the number of entries for club championships and these continue to be strongly contested by more players.

The strength of the clubs is not always represented in senior interclub competitions and the residentials. Across recent years various formats have been offered to try to attract more entries but without the success that rewards the efforts of the organising committee. Most recently however, the lowering of the age qualification to become a member of Tennis Seniors has made a difference to participant numbers.

It became apparent towards the end of last year that the playing level of our junior representatives was not matching those of other associations in our region. Andrew Karl was therefore brought back as an executive member with the particular responsibility for a junior development programme. Together with Peter O'Dea and more recently Matt King and Viv McCashin, Andrew has led a revision of the existing programme. The draft of the plan was published to the club delegates' committee recently and it offers some well-conceived ideas for the immediate future. Key factors are the focus on orange and green ball players, the involvement of extra coaches and the closer links to parents. While there are still changes to be made and funding issues to be solved, the upcoming season looks encouraging.

One of the partners of Tennis WBOP that is not always acknowledged is Sport Bay of Plenty. Peter O'Dea is the Coach Force Tennis leader who delivers a range of tennis programmes across our region including qualification as a referee, assistant coach and delivering workshops specifically for coaching growth. Sport BOP also provided the personnel to act as the independent selection committee for the Tennis WBOP major awards, where the winners go on to the Waikato Bays' selection team to find the region's representatives for the TNZ awards. Despite the covid-enforced reduction in staffing, Sport BOP also supports the primary and secondary schools' tournaments. It further allows the Executive to use its premises for monthly meetings free of charge. Thanks Sport BOP.

The Delegates' Committee has also worked hard in its role this year. Zoom meetings allow easier attendance during winter although the expectation that two delegates from each club attend is not consistently met by all clubs. There have been some lively discussions. Most importantly, as a vehicle for hearing the voices of the clubs, the committee is especially valuable. Thank you to every delegate for supporting the sport.

At the start of the year Tennis WBOP welcomed a new manager. Sussa has done a remarkable job in surviving the steep learning slope that she had to climb and in assimilating so much that was new to her. Her influence and style is evident in the communications she sends out to all clubs and in her obvious passion for tennis. She has a genuine work ethic that is admirable and that will be tested further as she prepares to roll out the Aims Games tournament in September. Thanks Sussa.

Lynne Hansen attends her last AGM as a member of the Executive. She has been an integral member of Tennis WBOP since it was established and she has put in many hours of voluntary work to make sure that it succeeded after the secession from the previous Waikato Bays structure. Throughout my time on the Executive she has been a strong proponent for all tennis and especially that of women's tennis. She has assisted in whatever way she believed was necessary to make things work, including qualifying as a tournament referee and has at times has kept us all grounded by asking the critical question *Why?* We appreciate and applaud your contribution Lynne. Now you can enjoy your tennis for the game itself.

Finally, thank you to the other members of the executive for their unselfish support for tennis in Tennis WBOP. You continue to redefine what the word volunteer means.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R Naumann". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Robert Naumann
Executive Chairperson
3 August 2021.