

THE MAINWALL SPECTATOR

OCTOBER 2009

Vernon Cassin, Editor

PRO TIP:

Are you getting enough spin on your first serves? It's serving that wears out your strings. Estimate how many hours of play you get between restrings. Professional players have to restrung their rackets every five hours of match play. If your strings are lasting more than fifteen hours, you need more whip in that serve.

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCT. 22

New League Begins! Draws for year long tournaments.

Important: See page 6 for more details on tournament signups.

OCT. 23:

Jimmy Knott (singles) —Boston

NOV. 13-15

US Ladies Open —Newport

Calhoun Witham (Doubles)—Aiken

NOV. 20-22:

Jimmy Dunn (Doubles) — Philadelphia

DEC. 4-6:

National Open (Singles)—TBD

DEC. 11-13

Whitney Cup

(Team Doubles)—NY

DEC. 11:

USCTA Annual Awards Dinner & Auction—NY

JAN. 15-18

US Parent-Child (Doubles) — Lakewood

Etchebaster Cup (Singles) — New York

JAN. 22-24

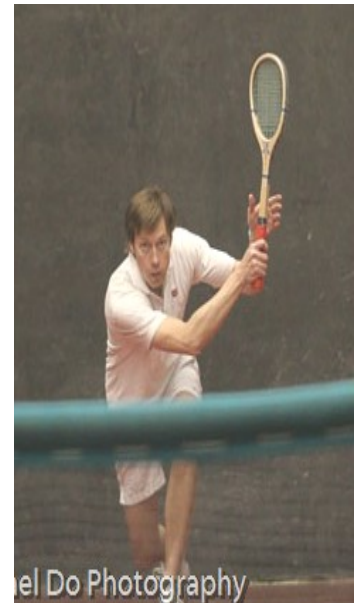
Banded level championships:

20-29 handicap) —Philadelphia

40-49 handicap) —Washington

50-59 handicap—Newport

60+ handicap—Boston



Jericho Seguin defends the hazard side against enemy stormtroopers.

COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT:

Bob Forbes

PROFESSIONALS:

Ivan Ronaldson

Phil Shannon

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Temple Grassi

Ryan Carey

Christine Donovan

Pat Homer

Steve Hufford

Kim Jaske

Jason Hirama

Vernon Cassin

NATIONAL OPEN COMING TO PRINCE'S COURT

The National Open, one of the top tournaments in United States court tennis, will come to Prince's Court again this December. It will run from December 4th through December 6th.

The National Open is a singles tournament open to all professionals working in

America. Matches are level, best of 5 sets, and are single elimination.

This is not the same tournament as the US Open, which is open to foreign players. That tournament will take place in 2010.

Players at the National Open will include Prince's

Court's own professionals, as well as professionals from the other US clubs. Top players Camden Riviere and Steve Virgona are expected to participate.

Generous Prince's Court members have already pledged prize money for the tournament.

PRINCE'S COURT VISITS PHILADELPHIA

Prince's Court sent six players up to Philadelphia last Saturday to play in an informal inter-club tournament. The competition returned Philadelphia's visit of the previous spring.

Each match was a single set, with the first player to ten games taking the match. Matches were, in theory, handicapped, although excellent match-making by the Philadelphia professionals meant that most matches were played at or near level.

Play began at ten a.m., with Eric Brownell playing a level match against the energetic Matt Loftus. Loftus played well below his handicap and took the match 10-3.

Next up was Bob Forbes, playing Philadelphia's Gary Barnes, Barnes owing 15. Excellent ball-placement from both players left the match neck-and-neck until 5-all. Then Forbes found his stride—and his boast—and pulled ahead, winning 10-8.

The next match, played off level, set Bill Schwarze and Gary Barnes against Jason Hiram and Vernon Cassin. Despite some difficulties reading the serve off the penthouse, Hiram/Cassin took the match 10-6.

Pat Homer and Christine Donovan were up next, receiving 15 from Mike Ziatyk and John Broussard. Overcoming early success by the Philly players, Homer/Donovan took the match 10-7.

Jason Hiram had the toughest opponent of the day in Gary Swantner (rec. 1/2 15, owe 1/2 15). Swantner's heavily cut railroad won him several aces, and his hard force put Hiram made him dangerous on the hazard side as well. Nevertheless the match was close, with the majority of games going to 40-all. Swantner, though, had the edge, eventually winning 10-7.

Vernon Cassin took on Philly's Bill Schwarze next. Play began with Schwarze owing 15, but was later changed to level. Schwarze had trouble with Cassin's sidewall serve, and spent most of the match on the hazard side. Despite excellent cut and placement, Schwarze lost the match 10-0.

Pat Homer was up next, taking on Philadelphia's ambidextrous marvel, Chris Bernabie. Pat's lobs for the dedans were as precise as ever, and her volleying was excellent. But Bernabie's twin forehands were too

much for her, winning the match at a closely fought 10-8.

Doubles continued with Bob Forbes and Eric Brownell playing Matt Loftus and John Broussard. Forbes/Brownell, still coming to terms with the court, got off to a rough start, and Loftus/Broussard soon racked up nine games. Forbes/Brownell found their footing and won several more games, but were eventually defeated 10-7. They may have been distracted by the smell of marijuana that permeated the court—presumably from the alley behind the club.

The last match pitted Christine Donovan against Philly's Lawrence Hicks. Donovan got off to a rough start, but her consistent volleying and heavily cut underarm serve brought the match to a nail-biting 9-9. Hicks took the last game 40-15, ending the day's play.

Also present for the day were Prince's Court spectators David Berry and Emily Peterson and professional Phil Shannon, whose enthusiastic support was much appreciated by the players.



Prince's Court players and spectators at the end of the day's play.

SCORES

(Philadelphia players are listed first. Winners names are in bold)

SINGLES:

Loftus v. Brownell: 10-3

Barnes v. **Forbes**: 10-8

Swantner v. Hiram 10-7

Schwarze v. **Cassin**: 10-0

Bernabie v. Homer: 10-8

Hicks v. Donovan: 10-9

DOUBLES:

Schwarze/Barnes v.

Hiram/Cassin: 10-8

Broussard/Ziatyk v.

Homer/Donovan: 10-7

Broussard/Loftus v.

Forbes/Brownell: 10-7

THE HISTORY OF TENNIS: GAMBLING

By Vernon Cassin

Gambling, it seems, has fallen out of favor in court tennis. Modern players rarely hazard their coin on the outcome of a match. Professionals, of course, compete for prize money, but they do not wager their own money on the game. Nor do spectators commonly bet on the outcome of the matches they watch from the galleries. With the exception of a little quiet wagering in Melbourne, gambling on tennis is dead. But court tennis has not always been unfriendly to the occasional flutter. In fact, historical sources suggest that gambling was prevalent even in the earliest stages of the game.

On the 18th of August, 1555, a Venetian priest named Antonio Scaino da Salo published a comprehensive treatise on ball games. Elegantly titled "*Tratta del Giuoco della Palla*," this book contained the first full description of tennis, or "*palla della corda*." The book – surprisingly comprehensive – discussed the rules, terminology, and history of tennis. Its discussion of the scoring system is instructive.

Scaino claimed that competitors could win three types of game: a simple,

double, or triple game. The simple game was the norm. A double game took place when the winner had won with four consecutive points to his opponent's none. A triple game took place when one player had three points against him (40-love), and nevertheless won the game by winning five consecutive points. According to Scaino, such a player would win "the three degrees of honor and reward." The phrase "reward" suggests the presence of a wager, with the player winning more money for his extraordinary feat.

Supporting evidence is not hard to find. Only three years later, a Frenchman visiting England wrote that "you may commonly see artisans playing at tennis for a crown." And in 1616, Webster's play *The Duchess of Malfi* (circa 1616) described a cardinal gambling at the sport: "They say he's a brave fellow. Will play his five thousand crowns at tennis, dance, court ladies, and one that hath fought single combats." Five thousand crowns was an enormous sum at the time, and would have required a brave cardinal indeed.

Gambling had its costs. As early as 1369, Charles V, a

great lover of tennis, became so concerned about large-scale gambling at the sport that he banned it in Paris—while continuing to play it himself. And in sixteenth century England, the game was nearly lost to gambling. Robert W. Henderson, in a 1934 article, claims the courts had become "the resorts of gamblers and of all sorts of persons of doubtful character," and were eventually abandoned. The game took a similar hit in the eighteenth century, when betting and cheating by English professionals brought tennis into widespread disrepute.

The negative effects of gambling prompted lawmakers to clamp down on the practice. A law passed during Henry VIII's rule, apparently designed to cut down on illegal gambling, prohibited keeping a tennis court for monetary gain. And a parliamentary statute enacted during Queen Anne's reign preventing the legal enforcement of wagers in a number of games, including tennis. Wagers could be made, but the courts would not enforce them if the loser backed out. Another statute allowed a professional who was cheated to collect three

times his normal prize-money.

Interestingly, these laws, which contained a laundry list of sports, were adopted verbatim by several American colonies. The result was that gambling at tennis was banned in several colonies that did not yet have courts. New Jersey and Connecticut had such statutes, and identical rules were put into place by common law courts in Virginia and Washington, D.C. The conservative American colonists—or at least their lawmakers—disapproved of gambling, and their laws swept broadly.

For whatever reason, gambling on tennis never really took off in the United States. Sadly, there is no record of great wagers between twentieth century plutocrats, with great companies and railroads wagered on a deep chase. And, gradually, gambling began to vanish from Europe as well. Perhaps the gradual decline of the game led to a decline in the infrastructure of gambling: the bookies who organized the betting, the professional and semi-professional gamblers who made wagering so common. Many of these people no doubt left the sport for greener pastures—perhaps the grassy courts of lawn tennis, home to so many more players. Or perhaps gambling on sport fell out of favor with the type of

LEAGUE PLAY TO BEGIN THURSDAY, OCT. 22

Prince's Court will officially kick off the 2009-10 season next Thursday with a start-of-season party. The evening will include a discussion of the upcoming league season. Master of Ceremonies Phil Shannon will present some ideas about this year's league play. Phil has several suggestions that may improve upon last year's notable success. Afterwards, players will be assigned to their leagues, and the play of the 2009 season will begin. The evening will also include the draw for the club's annual tournaments, including the popular Winstead and Allen cups.

MICHAEL DO WINS VIETNAMESE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Prince's Court was the host this year to the quasi-annual Vietnamese National Championship. As in previous years, the championship was between Prince's Court member Vu Hoang and Prince's Court emeritus Michael Do. Vu Hoang's continuing improvement had raised speculation that he might take the championship from reigning champion Do. The match—played off level—was attended by many of the Prince's Court faithful. As expected, the match was tightly fought. In the first set, Vu Hoang took an initial lead, bringing the game score to 5/4 Hoang. But Michael Do, energized by the pressure, hit six powerful left-handed serves to take the set. The second set followed a similar pattern, with Vu clawing his way to a 4/3 lead, and Michael Do buckling down in the latter half of the set. Michael took the second set 6/4, winning the match and the championship. The Vietnamese National Championship is open to all players of Vietnamese extraction. Because Vietnam does not currently have court, the championship is traditionally played in the United States.

“Vu climbed the tambour like an enormous spider”

GAMBLING, CONT.

people who play court tennis. Certainly the "gentleman's bet" is rare now, and gambling is more often thought of in conjunction with casinos, sports bars, and the grimmer sort of racetrack. Most of us do not mourn the decline of gambling from our sport. The game is probably cleaner than it used to be. Players strive for excellence, not for financial gain, and the trough beneath the demands is no longer cluttered with wagered currency. But there is, we suspect, a place in tennis for the small wager, the "flutter" of a few dollars (or francs, or pounds). These small bets may be worth preserving. After all, even the terminology of our sport is steeped in the culture of gambling. The word "hazard," derived from the Arabic word for dice-playing, did not originally mean "to be in danger." Its use of tennis is an older one. It meant "to put something at stake in a game of chance."

UNITED STATES COURT TENNIS PRESERVATION FOUNDATION: 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

The following material is taken from the USCTPF's 2009 Annual Report.

We include it to familiarize our readers with the important work of this organization.

The USCTPF is a tax-exempt charity that exists to preserve and promote the game and, of course, it accepts contributions for the purpose. It is neither a governing nor a regulatory body. Those are the roles of the USCTA.

According to our strategic plan adopted in 2007 (now supplemented by a budget process that permits us to align resources and priorities) our broad objectives are: players, courts, communications and finances. Thanks to the generosity of Jay and Suzie Schochet an endowed fund exists to support the U.S. Professional Singles Championship for the Schochet Cup, perhaps the world's premier professional tournament.

A board of up to 21 members, each serving a seven-year term, governs us. Daisy Prince and Greg Beard are the most recent additions and in addition to those listed elsewhere include Dick Brickley, Julie Rinaldini and Jimmy Van Alen. An Executive Committee consisting of Charles de Casteja, Bob Hay, Jane Lippincott, Robin Martin, Bill McLaughlin, Jonathan Pardee, Haven Pell and PJ Yeatman functions between board meetings and much of our work is done by email and phone. There is provision for committees of all variety and non-board members are welcome to serve.

Our programs for players focus on three areas: junior development (Lippincott, McLaughlin and Joe Tomaino) through general

support and the generosity of John Lieb; training of promising new players of whatever age through the Foundation Players Program created by Dick Boening and led by Bill McLaughlin; and support of our most skilled younger players by reimbursing the Association for its expenses in connection with the Clothier Cup and Van Alen Cup international competitions (jointly led on behalf of the Association and the Foundation by Howard McMorris.

New courts are the most visible symbols of success and we are pleased to have had important roles in two of them: Prince's Court in Washington and Georgian Court (Clarence McGowan) in New Jersey. But in this area, our role is to help the leader of the project to achieve his or her success. The establishment of a new court fund led by Charles de Casteja facilitates this effort. Through our new courts fund, we can provide seed money and we have assembled (with our friends in the T&RA) the resources and expertise to help the diligent and usually lonely volunteer developer.

Our communications objective is achieved: through part ownership of real tennis online (Haven Pell), which now provides your handi-cap and will soon provide a worldwide database of players; us-courttennis.org (Jane Lippincott), which is the website for the game in this country; a brief primer on the game (through the generosity

of Michael Flinn) is designed to attract new players that we distributed throughout the world; and a series of videos of important matches (Jonathan Pardee) that is available for worldwide distribution.

Finances are the fuel for the engine and our Investment Committee (Robin Martin, Chairman) carefully manages these. But no amount of careful management could – or should – have insulated us from the ravages of 2008. Thanks to prudent stewardship, our losses were held to a fraction of the overall market.

Looking forward, our player goal can be summarized in three words: more, younger, better. We have already touched on younger and better but how about more?

Every unused court hour is a foregone opportunity that can never be recovered, but recruiting new players is a continuing struggle exacerbated by the size of the game and an outdated image. Bob Hay and Peter diBonaventura are leading an effort to rethink what makes the game “a cut above.” The success of this effort requires the best thinking of many. “Why do we love it” is a far subtler question than it first appears.

Throughout the country at least one-third of our court capacity is unused. Everything – not least the economics – changes substantially if we can solve this problem.

We can also create new capacity by building new courts or bringing

old ones back to life. The key to success is the volunteer developer whom we must support and encourage in every way possible.

Dedicated volunteers ably direct the Association and the Foundation but we need to consider this candidly: some things that need doing are more suitable tasks for a salaried person than even the most committed volunteer. Running the game is now a big enough job to require some level of paid assistance. In all likelihood, the position would need to be endowed.

Our strategic plan quotes Winston Churchill (always a good idea) “success is nothing more than going from failure to failure with undiminished enthusiasm.” Our general philosophy reminds us to:

1. Encourage ideas from whatever source
2. Encourage volunteers to take on projects that interest them
3. Don't undervalue volunteer time
4. Give responsibility to small nimble groups
5. Avoid bureaucracy
6. Learn from mistakes but be willing to make them.

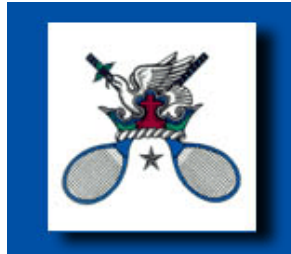
The names listed throughout this report are there to enable you to contact the appropriate person if a project is of interest or you would like to volunteer your time and skills in other ways.

FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.PRINCESCOURT.COM

PRINCE'S COURT

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*Σφαίρη ταί ὃ' ἄρ παίζον, ἀπὸ κρήδεμνα βαλουσαί
Βη ὃ' ἴμεν ὡς τε λέων ορεσίτροφος ἀλκί πεποιθώς*

TOURNAMENT SIGNUPS

Now is the time to sign up for the 2009/2010 club tournaments! The draw for all club tournaments will take place during the opening party on Thursday 22nd October, so players must enter beforehand.

Players should send Ivan an e-mail before Thursday, stating which events they wish to play in. The e-mail should have a subject line "All" to enter all tournaments, "none" to play in no tournaments, or "some" to play in the tournaments

included in the body of the e-mail.

The Competitions will run from November 1st through mid May 2010. They include:

The **Roe cup**: Level Singles Championship. Open to players with handicaps between 0 and 40, plus winners of previous Allen Cups. Currently held by Rich Morosca.

The **Allen Cup**: Level Singles Championship for handicaps above 40. Cur-

rently held by JZ Golden.

The **Winstead Cup**: Club Handicap singles championship, open to all members. Currently held by Vu Hoang.

The **Margot D'Hainholt Cup** – Ladies Singles Championship. Open to all female members. Currently held by Sara Lacombe.

There will be many other tournaments held on weekends at Prince's Court over the course of the season. Future newsletters will have details.

Prince's Court was built in 1997, the first court to be built from scratch in the United States since before World War I. It is one of only ten courts in the United States, and about 40 throughout the world. It is one of the only courts to have a glass main wall, allowing many more spectators to view a match than is possible on older courts.

Prince's Court is located at the Regency Sport & Health club of McLean, Virginia. It is managed by its professionals and by a committee of its own members.

For more on the sport of court tennis, as well as a more comprehensive guide to upcoming events, see the website of the United States Court Tennis Association, available at www.uscta.com.