

HENRY FARM TENNIS CLUB

President's report

October 2020

2020...! What a memorable year... but not too fondly. The COVID-19 pandemic hit us like everybody else around the world and it significantly disturbed the operations of the Club. But we managed to adapt and to still provide our members a good venue to play tennis in a safe environment.

As mentioned via email, with the recent resurgence of the pandemic and the accompanying government-mandated restrictions on large group congregations, it is impossible for us to host a traditional in-person Annual General Meeting. Under normal circumstances, this report would have been reviewed at the AGM. It is being sent to you to read via e-mail. Any feedback Club members wish to give could be done also via e-mail at info@henryfarmtennisclub.ca.

Club Board Executive

A call for new Board members was sent out in September. But only one club member stepped forward to volunteer on the Board. The Board composition for next year remains essentially unchanged, as follows:

Officers

President	Bernard Assouad
Vice-President	Vijay Kandeth
Treasurer	Jose San Juan
Secretary	Bernard Assouad (acting)
Membership	Bernard Assouad (acting)

Directors

Senior Pro	Ed Wilson
Promotion and Communications	Vijay Kandeth
Grounds	Kevon Regert
Social	Lorraine Gray, Laura Norris
Member at Large	Jasmin Carleton, Elena Osina
Beginners network	Carol Dunn

I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for the success of the Club. All are unpaid volunteers, without whose dedication, enthusiasm and loyalty, a Club like ours cannot exist, let alone survive and flourish; they spend countless personal hours to serve the Club and its members. So, heartfelt thanks.

COVID response

The pandemic hit us in March, just as we would normally prepare for the tennis season. It created a huge amount of uncertainty. Since our Community Club falls under the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation department jurisdiction, we were initially prevented from opening the Club. Then FPR issued stringent guidelines, that were subsequently and gradually relaxed. On top of that, our OTA-arranged liability insurance was revoked on account of COVID and which created an unwelcome personal risk for the Club Board. It took some time and effort by a few community clubs to get the insurance company to reverse course and reinstate our insurance coverage. In the end, we were able to open the Club around June 15, while following the PFR guidelines.

The Clubhouse was closed. Court booking via our website was made mandatory to allow contact tracing if necessary. And signage was posted to remind members of the precautions they need to take.

Fortunately, no COVID case related to playing tennis at HFTC was reported.

Membership

As can be expected in this very unusual year, our membership is down vs. 2019. This year we had 95 adult members and 42 juniors. Last year, we had 123 and 37 respectively.

I can attribute this decline to late start of the season due to the COVID-driven uncertainty, and therefore the late opening of the Club (June 15); the fact that many inter-club leagues (ICTA and NYTA) were cancelled also deterred stronger members from joining; and of course, some members concerns of contamination.

On the other hand, the recruiting efforts of our Pros (Ed Wilson, John Mowat and Stephanie Willerding) helped offset this decline. This is clearly evident from the increase in juniors membership.

Lower membership also had the effect of reducing our membership revenues.

Organized activities

To offset the absence of inter-club leagues, the Club decided to introduce a singles house league on Tuesdays and a mixed-gender doubles house league on Thursday, the latter similar to last year's. Both leagues were enthusiastically attended. The final matches were played in early October.

The winners in the singles league were Andrew Williams, David Wood and Jun Bargamento in their respective groups. Congratulations to all.

The winning team in the doubles league was Team B (Ryan Ancog, Amir Esfahani, Kiman Esfahani, Joseph Ceneda, Laurence Lopena, Jun Bargamento and Marsha Contway). Congratulations to all as well.

Our Pro, Ed Wilson, organized our traditional year-end tournament. An Invitational A tournament and an Open B tournament, both singles and mixed-gender doubles. The winner of the A singles tournament is Andrew Williams; the doubles A was won by the Ryan Ancog/Ralph del Carmen pair. The B singles winner was Antonio Niro; the mixed-gender doubles was won by the Edward Zilli/Melissa Chiang pair. Here again, well done, winners.

A big thank you is owed to Elena Osina who excellently organized and managed the house leagues.

Given the popularity of the house leagues, we will have them again next year, maybe with more play nights, if the numbers warrant it.

Unfortunately, a number of traditional programs had to be dropped on account of COVID: the free start-of-season clinics, the junior after school program in May and June, the twice a week morning kafee-klastch and the Beginners Network. If the situation reverts to some level of normality next year, we will re-offer them again.

I need to note here the sad passing last August of Martin Jaeger who was a club member and a kafee-klastsch organizer.

Pro team

We were blessed this year with an addition tour team of tennis coaches, all of whom were quite busy working with both adults and juniors. Besides Ed Wilson who has been with the

Club for over 3 decades, John Mowat returned for a second year and Stephanie Willerding joined in the latter half of the season.

I would like to thank here Ed , John and Stephanie for their efforts to raise the level of play in the Club and to train our future tennis stars.

Courts usage

At the beginning of the season, the NYTA approached us for the possibility of using our courts for the significantly increase in kids they were expected to coach this year. Since they needed court time during the daytime when our courts are least utilized, we agreed to let them access our courts and entered into an agreement with them. This generated a sizeable income for the Club, which was welcome.

Furthermore, during the fall the Bayview Glen School (on Duncan Mills) also requested the use of our courts for their gym program; we also agreed for the same reason as above.

Digitalization

Over the past few years, we have gradually moved into the digital age, taking advantage of the capabilities provided by our web site.

Membership sign-up and payment was overwhelmingly online in 2020 through our website. Besides complying with the COVID management guidelines, this is saving us a lot of paper and money handling, and has provided significant work savings in the area of membership tracking.

Our court booking facility has been operational for a few years, and every year we find other opportunities to leverage it further. This year, almost 3,000 bookings were made with nary a complaint.

We will continue to further increase our use of digitalization to reduce costs and offer more services

Our Facebook account has not been as widely used as last year. A rethink on how to better leverage it in the future will take place.

Court re-surfacing

I am sure many of you have noticed the slowly deteriorating surface of the courts, in addition to the perennial blackening caused by the nearby 401 traffic. Some pitted portions need repairs, and the whole surface needs to be repainted. We have received a number of quotations to do the work; but are not in a position to fund the work on our own. We will need some financial support from the City or from other sources. Any suggestions are welcome.

Finances

Our books will close at the end of November. Yet, the current outlook for the full year 2020 indicates a nice surplus; this was not anticipated at the beginning of the season when the pandemic struck. This would bring our reserve fund closer to our desired target .

In conclusion, I wish to thank again the members of the Executive for their dedication. I also wish everybody a pleasant and safe winter and I hope to see everybody back at the Club next year.

Bernard Assouad, President