

HENRY FARM TENNIS CLUB

President's report

November 2021

2021 was another memorable year for many reasons which I will cover below.

As mentioned via email, with the continuing restrictions on large group gatherings, it is impossible for us to host a traditional in-person Annual General Meeting in the clubhouse. 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 few stepped forward to volunteer on the Board. The Board composition for next year stands as follows:

Officers

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

Directors

Senior Pro	Ed Wilson
Promotion and Communications	Vijay Kandeth
Grounds	Kevon Regert
Social	Jeanette Kouyoumdjian
Member at Large	Lorraine Gray, Elena Osina, John Mowat

Raluca Costea agreed to become the Membership Officer earlier this year, and Jeanette Kouyoumdjian will become our Social Director starting next season. I wish to welcome both ladies to the Board.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of this past year's Board members 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.

I would like to particularly recognize the contributions to the Club of our Head Pro, Ed Wilson. He has been at the Club for well over 30 years; he is the mainstay of the Club, its heart and soul. Besides his coaching of juniors and adults, he also spends countless hours supporting our Grounds Director and insuring that the Club facilities are in top shape.

So, on behalf of all the members of the Club, heartfelt thanks to Ed and to the rest of the Executive.

COVID impact

The opening of the Club this past spring, much like 2020, was affected by government restrictions to control the spread of the pandemic. We were at the time in the middle of the third wave and were subjected to a phased re-opening. The various phases and associated restrictions are described on the Club website. We had to wait until early July to be able to

operate normally, although with minor restrictions; by which time many programs had to be dropped or re-worked.

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

Membership

Surprisingly and mirroring what was happening at all the tennis clubs in Toronto, our membership levels soared to levels unseen in many years. This year we had 206 adult members and 171 juniors. Last year, we had 95 and 42 respectively.

How to explain this change that (as mentioned above) has been experienced by all the Toronto clubs, to the point they had to stop accepting new membership registrations? Is this a reaction to Covid-19 confinement, or to the success of our young Canadian champions? It's hard to say.

I need here to recognize the recruiting efforts of our Pros, Ed Wilson and John Mowat.

Naturally, higher membership also had the effect of improving our membership revenues and the Club's finances.

Club insurance

Recall that the Club buys liability and property loss insurance through a group program managed by the Ontario Tennis Association that covers all its member Clubs. In March, we were presented with a premium doubling the 2020 premium for the same coverage (\$1900 vs \$960). Of note is a 2200% increase in property insurance resulting in a \$250 premium to insure \$5000 in property value with a \$1000 deductible!

As a result, we had to review our required coverage and were able to reduce our premium to \$1300. Needless to say that there was an enormous outcry by all the member Clubs.

Fortunately, the Government of Ontario stepped in and granted an insurance rebate to tennis clubs through the OTA; HFTC received \$440.

The OTA decided to establish a committee (of which our Vijay Kandeth is a member) to work with the OTA and the insurance company, with a view to establishing more reasonable bases for calculating premiums, and differentiate between community summer clubs (like ours) from year-around clubs with more complex facilities and exposures. Work in progress.

Courts usage

Similar to last year, the North York Tennis Association (bubbles at Peanut Plaza) requested us to use our courts, as they were seeing a very significant increase in junior members, in addition to their courts being out of commission while a new bubble and building modifications were taking place. Expecting another low membership year, we agreed to allow NYTA to use 2 of our courts during the day when members activity is low. This generated a welcome income stream for the Club.

Together with the offering of court time to NYTA, we agreed in late May (while the Covid reopening phases were still evolving) with Ms. Daria Burobina, who is a coach at NYTA, that she would act as a Pro at the Club as she promised to bring in new members. Ms Burobina insisted on running her own junior and adult programs under her own brand (Bounce Tennis) with a more expensive price structure than HFTC's. This created confusion with parents wanting to sign up their kids: Bounce Tennis or HFTC? We had also a number of disagreements with Ms. Burobina, and she decided to leave HFTC in July.

The spoken for courts by NYTA were used extensively, although with declining attendance as the summer progressed.

Needless to say, our experience with Bounce Tennis was unpleasant and it caused a lot of confusion with the parents. Fortunately our existing Pros, Ed and John stepped in and offered very successful and well attended programs.

In addition to the NYTA, we also opened our courts to the Bayview Glen School (on Duncan Mills) for their phys-ed program during the school year and also during the low usage daytime.

Adult organized activities

Like last year, the Club organized a singles house league on Mondays and a mixed-gender doubles house league on Wednesdays. They were run effectively by, respectively, Ryan Ancog and Vijay Kandeth. Both leagues were enthusiastically attended. The final matches were played in early October. Thanks to both gentlemen.

Our Pro, Ed Wilson, organized a series of traditional year-end tournament for adults and juniors during October.

With a late season start, the ICTA ran a half-tournament. HFTC fielded a team in the C league which was captained by Elena Osina. The 55+ league was cancelled this year.

The Saturday morning NYTA 40+ league was also canceled because of late start of the season.

We also had to cancel our social kaffe-klatch in the mornings for lack of interest.

And in lieu of the traditional season opener free clinic and the beginners network, the Club offered a suite of free lessons for beginners during the summer and fall, coached by our Pro Ed Wilson. 35 members signed up for these lessons and they were well attended despite the many re-schedules due to rain.

Junior programs

I believe that we had a very successful junior program season, the best in recent memory, thanks to our 2 pros, Ed Wilson and John Mowat.

Despite a late start, the Covid-generated complications, and the rain delays, 24 kids signed-up for the spring junior programs under Ed Wilson. We intend to repeat again next year, assuming we don't enter into a 5th Covid wave.

Our summer half-day camp attracted 112 kid weeks, which is unprecedented, and despite the challenges of cramming many kids on one court; John Mowat, who was running the summer camp, had to deal with these challenges and to the general satisfaction of the parents. Lesson learned: we will dedicate more courts to the summer camp next year, assuming at least the same level of interest.

New this year was the fall junior program, which attracted 31 kids to 50 sessions, under the joint direction of coaches John and Ed. We will again repeat next year.

The additional learning was that juniors were interested in Saturday afternoon lessons; and we will continue that as well.

Community outreach

At the request of the local Community Association (HFCIA), the Club hosted their traditional Neighbours' Night Out event on September 11. Over 30 children and adults attended in-court sessions with our Pros led by Ed Wilson and supported by John Mowat and guest Pro Stuart Perkins. A number of community members also provided support. A number of other activities were organized by the community in the park just outside the Club fences: games, balloons, face painting etc. It was a successful event well appreciated by the community.

Digitalization

This past year, we have continued to improve our digital tools, taking advantage of the capabilities provided by our web site.

Membership sign-up and payment was exclusively online in 2021 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.

In addition to membership, junior programs registrations were also handled digitally through our website.

Our court booking facility has been operational for a few years, and every year we find other opportunities to leverage it further. This year, we added the possibility to see which courts are booked, when and by whom.

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

Court re-surfacing

Back in April, we met with our local Councillor, Shelley Carrol at the Club and she was surprised at the deteriorating status of our courts. We requested that Section 37 funds be used to re-surface our courts.

These funds (\$400,000) were deposited in trust with the City by El-Ad, the developer of the Emerald City complex. They were designed to offset the damage and inconvenience caused to the Henry Farm community by exceeding the permitted zoning restrictions. This sum was to be used to build an off-leash dog park in Havenbrook Park; that proposal was rejected by the community, thus freeing these funds for other usage.

Councillor Carrol decided to use the Participatory Budgeting process to allocate those funds to projects proposed by the community. A number of projects were proposed, assessed and cost-estimated by City staff. On September 1, a vote was taken, and the resurfacing project at HFTC, estimated at \$60,000 came in second place, and was thus approved for funding.

Since then, we have been meeting with City staff to start executing the resurfacing project so as to have newly surfaced courts by the start of the 2022 season.

Finances

Our books will close at the end of November. The current outlook for the full year 2021 indicates a nice surplus; this was not anticipated at the beginning of the season when the pandemic third wave struck. This will bring our reserve fund to a much healthier position .

Next year (2022)

As mentioned at the outset, this has been an exceptional year despite all the challenges. It has provided us a number of learnings that we will use going forward to make the Club and the programs offered even more attractive. Stay tuned as we will reconnect again in January.

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
November 2021*