



## Issue 13 – Winter 2014 - 2015

### Message from the Executive Director – Jim Boyce

For many tennis club members in Ontario, the winter season brings a temporary halt to their playing days. Many others however, don't miss a beat; they just continue to play indoors. At the pro level, tennis is practically a 12 month season, and with the recent success of Canadian players, the appetite for playing year-round has grown at the recreational level. Demand for indoor play has never been higher in Canada. The OTA has over 50 member clubs who host indoor play in one form or another and many seasonal clubs who organize "tennis nights" for their summer members at indoor facilities. For those players who enjoy competitive play, there are several excellent winter leagues and the OTA sanctions or hosts tournaments virtually every week of the year. There are also winter Kids Tennis programmes popping up in school gyms and church basements across the province. Ontario could probably do with another 20 to 30 indoor facilities in order to satisfy demand. For a list of OTA member clubs with indoor facilities, [click here](#).



For many of you who are on a club executive committee, whether you play in the winter or not, tennis is never very far from the top of your mind. There are many things that are done behind the scenes during the winter that are essential for the successful operation of a club, whether it is for winter play or in preparation for next year's spring opening. The OTA staff appreciates your efforts and is available to offer assistance at any time.



Looking back at 2014, I would have to say that the OTA had a great year. We were successful in obtaining 3 major grants. These grants allowed the OTA to expand our operations in Ottawa with the Capital Kids grant, to deliver the Federal Government's Canadian Sport for Life programme through our Raise the Net initiative and to begin to upgrade our virtual reach with a Digital Strategy grant. Thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ministry of Tourism, Recreation and Sport for their generous support!

On the competitive player front, many Ontario Athletes distinguished themselves in national and international competitions. Obviously ATP pro Milos Raonic continued his ascent to the top echelons of the game. Whether he was winning tournaments, going to the late rounds in Grand Slams or representing Canada in Davis Cup action, he continued to electrify Canadian tennis fans and inspire a whole new generation of players. Of course, we're proud to say that Milos, (pictured right, 2004), got his competitive start in the OTA system. Other noteworthy competitors from Ontario who performed well in 2014 include pro players Gabriela Dabrowski, Sharon Fichman and Gloria Liang, NCAA player Brayden Schnur and junior competitors Bianca Andreescu and Katherine Sebov. There are many other athletes representing our province proudly in national and international events.



As well, the OTA was very fortunate to have the continued support of its many sponsors and we were happy to welcome the National Bank, Pizzaville and Sporting Life as new partners. Without all of our sponsors support, many of the things we undertake, including the aforementioned competitive structure, would not be possible. Please support our sponsors whenever you can.

As I look ahead to 2015, I feel very optimistic about the health of the game and the expanding role the OTA intends to take to promote tennis across the province. Obviously, the hard work that all of you do is a key ingredient in the growth and enjoyment of the game and we look forward to partnering with you again this year. We welcome your input any time and encourage you to join us at our AGM, April 11th at the Rexall Centre in Toronto. Let's make this the best year ever for tennis in Ontario!

## Player Development Update – Kartik Vyas



2014 was a fantastic year for competitive tennis in Ontario. We had over 600 tournament draws in both junior and adult categories; over 70 clubs who hosted one or more OTA sanctioned tournaments and many athletes who were highly successful in national and international play. Of particular note, the U9 and U10 categories saw a real boom in the number of players and events last year. More and more young children seem to be taking up competitive and recreational tennis – due in no small part to clubs like yours, who welcome these youngsters, teach them how to play and encourage them to compete.

We introduced a new competitive tournament and ranking structure in conjunction with Tennis Canada and the other provinces at the beginning of 2014. After an initial ramp-up period, we are pleased to report that the system is working well and is encouraging competitors to play more often.

Thank you to all the club tournament directors who took the time to learn the tournament software package and for their efforts in running our sanctioned events. I would particularly like to thank the Lambton G&CC, the Bayview G&CC and the Mississauga G&CC for generously hosting the Senior Provincials, both in 2014 and again this year, while long-time host the Boulevard Club undergoes renovations.

I would be remiss at this time if I did not also mention a potential venue change for the Junior Outdoor Provincials. For many years, Kew Gardens Tennis Club has generously hosted this tournament. The club membership is currently evaluating their ongoing involvement in the event by way of a referendum, with the results to be released at the end of January. Once those results are known, we will report any new developments to you in a special release right away, as we are aware that it might affect several of your junior members and coaches. Regardless of the outcome, the OTA would like to recognize Kew's important contribution to the development of junior tennis in this province.



Of course, our tournament structure is a stepping stone for many athletes from Ontario, who go on to distinguish themselves both nationally and internationally. Heading up this list, of course, is Milos Raonic who is tearing up the ATP and has risen higher than any other male Canadian player in history. Some other notable achievements in 2014 by players who have gone through, or are still active in our tournament system include Gabriela Dabrowski, who won her first pro singles title at the \$50,000 Tevlin Challenger in Toronto and also



won 3 doubles titles; Gloria Liang who won her first pro tournament victory in a \$10,000 ITF event in Martinique, (actually in January 2015); Sharon Fichman, who won 2 ITF doubles titles and Brayden Schnur, who played both at the NCAA level where he won the NCAA Indoor Nationals and at the Rogers Cup where he qualified for the main draw. On the senior front, two athletes from Ontario won world individual championships. including Inge Weber, Singles O75 champion and Muffie Grieve who won the O80 and O85 doubles and was also part of the championship women's O80 team. On the junior front there were several achievements but the player who stands out the most is Bianca Andreescu, who in January won the prestigious les Petit Aus U13 tournament in France and followed that up with a victory in the U16 Orange Bowl in Florida! Many other Ontario juniors played well in national and international competition – a testament to the robust OTA

### Competitive Structure.

I would like to take a moment to thank two individuals whose generosity and commitment to junior tennis in Ontario are truly inspirational. Mr. Murray Rubin is the benefactor of the U9 Champions, a major junior event on the calendar, and Mrs. Betty Birmingham who is a major benefactor of the Ontario Junior Closed Championships. A Sportsmanship award was named in honour of Betty's late husband Bruce; who, along with Betty have been long time supporters of tennis in Ontario and Canada. Betty also officiates at the event every year! Thank you both!



As we look ahead to 2015, we would like to continue to grow our competitive structure, giving more opportunities for registered competitors at all levels to enjoy tournament play. In order to do this, we would like to ask for your help. We are always on the lookout for new clubs to host our sanctioned tournaments, especially in adult categories. Please contact Andrew Chappell ([achappell@tennisontario.com](mailto:achappell@tennisontario.com)) for more info. As well, we are looking for more tournament officials. We would like to ask you to talk to any of your members who you think might be interested in becoming an official to contact our office, ([ota@tennisontario.com](mailto:ota@tennisontario.com)). The OTA has a programme, Raise the Net that will actually cover the officiating course cost for qualified club volunteers. Finally, encourage your members, especially adult players, to register as a competitive player and compete in our great events!

### **Communications and Marketing – Peter Malcomson**

OTA Marketing had a busy 2014; launching many new initiatives, securing sponsorship and advertising, promoting special events and working with the other OTA departments to ensure that any important information got out to our member clubs and players. As you know, this newsletter, Tennis Club Connection, was designed to keep our member club executives and managers apprised of what is happening at the OTA. Due to the unique membership structure at the OTA, wherein our membership is comprised of 240+ clubs, and not the 73,000 individual players within those clubs, (except our 2100 registered competitors), Tennis Club Connection is an extremely important information tool. When we launch new programmes such as Raise the Net and the National Bank Roadshow, or a new event like the Tennis Rocks! Festival, we publicize it on our website, through press releases, via our social media sites, in Ontario Tennis Magazine



and in our weekly OTA player newsletter SPIN. While all of these outlets contribute to getting the word out, we know that the most direct way to reach all of those players is through you, the tennis club executive. In this day and age, with privacy laws becoming more restrictive than ever, it is difficult to obtain more names and contact information from an individual player, even though we know that most of your members will be interested in at least some of the things we do. We have appreciated your efforts in the past in getting information from the OTA to your members through e-blasts, your club website, posters etc. and would like to ask you help us again in 2015. One of our goals this year is to dramatically increase the number of players who receive SPIN, visit our website and interact with us through our social media platforms. We recently re-designed SPIN to be more reader friendly and we will be re-launching our website as well. Many of our younger players are much more



engaged in social media platforms and to that end we have begun to get more active on Instagram, our OTA TV Youtube channel, Twitter and Facebook. Our plan is to make all of these tools more fun and interactive – utilizing contests, product discounts, surveys, tennis news feeds, blogs and tennis trivia to enhance your players' experience. I will send you information shortly on our digital strategy which will detail all of our communications platforms and explain how it will benefit your club and its members. We hope that this will further encourage you to bring us closer to your players!



The OTA will continue to travel across the province with the **National Bank Roadshow**, visiting community festivals, major tennis club events and tournaments and school programmes. Many of the stops will include exciting interactive activities including product demos and giveaways, the **Pizzaville Smash Cage**, Kids Tennis demos, Raise the Net workshops, Rogers Cup deals, and more. If you have a significant event at your club this season, let the Roadshow add some extra sizzle. For more info on the National Bank Roadshow, click [here](#).



It's **Club OTA** card time again... we are busy lining up partners for our Club OTA loyalty card again this year and will be developing an app version by mid-year. We will be printing and sending the cards out earlier this year and expect to have some great deals. Some clubs have actually decided to use the cards as their members' club id, thereby saving money on shoe tags. For those clubs who were sent cards in previous years, we will be sending 20% of your membership total to cover new members. Please feel free to contact me if you need more information about the card or have some local retailers, restaurants or attractions that might be interested in presenting exclusive offers to OTA players.

After a successful inaugural event that hosted over 200 juniors, we will again be presenting the **Tennis Rocks! Festival** at the Rexall Centre in Toronto. Produced in partnership with the Inter County Tennis Association, the Festival will have a few changes this year – the date will be moved to May and will be a one day event. The tournament portion will again be open to junior participants from all OTA and ICTA member clubs. Tennis Rocks! will bring together junior players from across the province and will also include attractions such as the Pizzaville Smash Cage, a pro exhibition match, entertainment, food and beverage hospitality, retail/sponsor area, prizes and more. Details on the event and the junior team competition will be available soon. This is an event that you will definitely want to tell your junior players and their families about.



Our **OTATV** in-house channel is available for your clubhouse. We are busy adding digital content to OTATV and will also be collecting tennis feeds from all around the tennis world. This season we will be webcasting significant OTA tournaments, producing programming that will highlight the sport of tennis, with a particular emphasis on players and stories from Ontario and updating players on OTA tournaments and events. OTA TV is powered by **Screenscape**. Screenscape is Canada's number 1 digital signage network and would be a great, low-cost addition to

your facility. It allows you to embed your own club information with imported content; information that will keep your members informed about club events, tournaments or policies – relieving pressure on your staff and volunteers. The information can be easily updated from anywhere and can actually generate revenues for your club..... To view our OTATV channel, click [here](#). To find out more about Screenscape and OTATV, contact me at, [pmalcomson@tennisontario.com](mailto:pmalcomson@tennisontario.com).

### **Membership and Coaching – Jay Neill**

Although the weather outside might not make one think of outdoor tennis, I am sure that your club executive is very busy planning for your 2015 outdoor season. One of the things your team needs to keep in mind is that it is very important that you keep your club's insurance coverage current (with no lapse). This is just a heads up that the 2015-16 package will be e-mailed to your club around mid February. As you may know, the OTA AGM is set for April 11 at the Rexall Centre in Toronto. Your club will receive more details on this event as we get closer to that date. We look forward to seeing you at the AGM.



This is a reminder the OTA is once again proud to have Wilson as our official tennis ball. The 2015 ball program information will be e-mailed to you as soon as it is ready. Please use Wilson for all of your club's tennis ball needs.

I understand that you may be new to your club executive in 2015. Just so you know the **CLUBSTRONG OTA Resource Centre** is available for clubs to access. Please go to <http://www.raisethe.net.ca/#!clubstrong/ctst> in order to do this. The Resource Centre contains lots of helpful information, including OTA Annual Reports, articles and posters, the OTA Club Manual, OTA Benefits, the Strategic Plan and more! The information in this Resource Centre will help you

to run your club more efficiently! Please feel free to contact me at [jneill@tennisontario.com](mailto:jneill@tennisontario.com) if you have any questions on club membership and I will be happy to answer them for you.

As far as coaching certification goes, much of our 2015 schedule has now been finalized. Click [here](#) to view all of the various course levels, dates, locations and other pertinent information. Many of our courses fill quickly so anyone who wishes to register for a course needs to contact me ASAP to register. You will learn a great deal and have fun while taking one of our certification courses. I look forward to working again with all club executives to help make 2015 the best year ever for your tennis clubs!





As the new year gets underway, the OTA continues with its schools programme. We have working relationships with many boards and are visiting schools to introduce tennis into the school curriculum. Let us help you develop a tennis pathway from a local school to your club. We need your help to make sure that once these kids are exposed to tennis in school that they will have a place to go to continue to enjoy the sport. For more info on the schools programme email us at [ota@tennisontario.com](mailto:ota@tennisontario.com).

The OTA is continuing its relationship with the Holland Bloorview Rehabilitation Center and the North York Tennis Association, The Bloorview programme has helped many children with disabilities to learn the benefits of playing the sport and has also trained many volunteers. We look forward to continuing to grow this initiative and others like it. If you would like more information on Bloorview or wheelchair tennis, contact Ely Schwartz, [eschwartz@tennisontario.com](mailto:eschwartz@tennisontario.com).



We look forward to visiting large community and tennis club events with the **Pizzaville Smash Cage**. This National Bank Roadshow attraction is a magnet for kids and adults alike and a great way to add excitement to your events. Prizes courtesy of Pizzaville are given out for fastest serve, most accurate shots or even for just trying. If you would like the National Bank Roadshow and Pizzaville Smash Cage to be a part of your event, contact us at [ota@tennisontario.com](mailto:ota@tennisontario.com). We book up very quickly so let us know when you have a large event at your club or in your community. We can accommodate indoor clubs as well.

**Raise the Net** is an OTA program which is funded by the **Ontario Trillium Foundation**. The main purpose of the program is to educate Club Executives, pros, parents, club members and volunteers at community tennis clubs across Ontario on the Long Term Athlete Development model, or LTAD. Executives can bring Raise the Net to their community club through either an event or a seminar. Raise the Net has visited clubs to help host events, socials and clinics to provide a quick education on the LTAD and distribute flyers on the LTAD for more information. Also, Raise the Net seminars for single clubs, group clubs (AGM's) are also an option for in depth explanation on the LTAD. Additionally, there are some terrific opportunities for your club's volunteers to learn how to be an on-court official and even pro certification! For more information on Raise the Net or to book a club visit, please contact: Sahaj Jayanth, Raise the Net Project Manager: [sjayanth@tennisontario.com](mailto:sjayanth@tennisontario.com), 416 514 1123, [www.raisethenet.ca](http://www.raisethenet.ca).



The first year of the Trillium-funded Capital Kids programme in the **National Capital Tennis Region** was a great success in 2014. Running in 4 different locations across Ottawa – Sheffield Glen Park in the East end, Judge Park in the West end, Alta Vista School in Ottawa South, and Jules Morin/Bordeleau Park in Lowertown, over the summer, Capital Kids had 770 kids registered and participated in the program. Lessons were offered between 3 and 5 times per week (depending on the location) with over 80% of kids playing twice per week. The program provided equipment for all the coaches/participants, and racquets and balls were available for purchase at a subsidized rate. Over 150 racquets were purchased over the course of the summer. For 2015 there are plans to

expand the programme to up to 8 locations in total with a goal to reach over 1700 kids. We will hire more coaches/instructors and engage local volunteer coaches to help create capacity and develop skills in each community. We plan on introducing more competitive playing opportunities for our Capital Kids by offering more Rogers Rookie Tour events at local OTA clubs. Creating more tournaments will not only help to integrate these new juniors into the Long Term Athletic Development (LTAD) pathway, but will help create a connection with their local member clubs which can facilitate playing and further coaching opportunities.

The National Capital Tennis Region saw an infusion of more competitive events for juniors held across a larger number of private and community clubs in 2014.



1252 participants competed in 23 events citywide at 10 different venues compared with 918 participants at 4 different venues in 2013. The majority of events were in the provincial 3-star (3\*\*\*) category in which players can obtain significant ranking points. The Roman Cup was another great success this season, expanding its participation from 250 competitors to 323 this season. It is now the single largest junior tournament in Ontario and remains a National Qualifying Event for Tennis Canada. We plan on expanding the number of “Rogers’ Rookie Tour” and 2-star competitive series events. With the influx of new players from Capital Kids and other new players from across the city, we will strive to provide ample playing opportunities for rookies in order to boost their confidence and interest in pursuing tennis at a more competitive level.



A new Ottawa Smash Cage was brought to the region and an agreement was formed with local tennis retailer, Kunststadt Sports, who will transport and facilitate it at club and city events. The Smash Cage is a giant, inflatable castle equipped with a radar gun ready to test the speed of your serve or any other shot your heart desires! It’s a great addition to any large event like a tournament, BBQ, social, or special event that your club holds. Since its arrival in August, it has been used at 5 different club events with very positive feedback from both juniors and adults who participated. Please contact [john.winspurdy@gmail.com](mailto:john.winspurdy@gmail.com) in the Ottawa region to book the Smash Cage for your event in 2015.

**Did You Know...?**

... that Canadian **Milos Raonic** was 2<sup>nd</sup> in total aces hit on the ATP tour in 2014 with a total of 1,093 in 62 matches. Ivo Karlovic led with a total of 1,185 in 64 matches.

... that tennis was first played at the Olympics in 1896?

... that Bjorn Borg was the first player to earn more than \$1,000,000 in prize money in a single season, 1979.

**Would you like other executive members at your club to receive the TCC newsletter?**

If so, simply send an email with a list of contacts to [ota@tennisontario.com](mailto:ota@tennisontario.com) and put the word “newsletter” in the subject line

If you have any comments you would like to make to the OTA feel free to contact anyone at the office or email [ota@tennisontario.com](mailto:ota@tennisontario.com) . For a staff directory, visit [www.tennisontario.com/Client/bios.aspx](http://www.tennisontario.com/Client/bios.aspx)

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