

Tennis club, anyone?



Three First Matche -- John Napier's Fields, April 1, 1867 --

--AND STILL GOING STRONG !!

KINGSTON TENNIS CLUB

SPRING NEWSLETTER 1990

It was Mark Twain, originator of the two-handed (literary) backhand, who said "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." Happily the same can be said for the Kingston Tennis Club -- and the doors will indeed open for our 64th season at our now-famous million dollar Napier Street site on Saturday, April 28.

As always, members young and old, new and old, not-so-new and old, are all welcome. An application form is enclosed which may be returned to Box 621 or brought to the club.

Reinstating another old tradition, a clean-up morning will be held at 10 AM on Saturday, April 21. It's a dirty job but someone has to do it, and any members who can spare an hour or two (no more) will be much appreciated. Please bring a rake!

1990 EXECUTIVE AND CLUB PERSONNEL

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| PRESIDENT: | Doug Bowie |
| PAST PRESIDENT: | Suzie Julien |
| VICE PRESIDENTS: | Sue Young Catherine McDonnell |
| TREASURER: | Elizabeth Birtwhistle |
| TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR: | Mike McDonnell |
| SECRETARY: (on sabbatical) | Karen Surgenor |
| MEMBER AT LARGE AND ACTING SECRETARY: | George Clark |
| CLUB PROFESSIONALS: | Robin Walker Bill Parker |
| CLUB STEWARDS: | Jeff Neasmith Nicki Myslivecek Peter Walker |

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As this has been an unusual, perhaps pivotal, few months for the K.T.C., it seems appropriate to bring members up to date on the latest developments concerning the club, and the efforts which have been made by the executive on the club's behalf over the winter.

Early Membership Drive -- Thanks to you, this initiative has been a marked success, bringing in 217 paid-up members and over \$21,000, and forestalling a financial crisis. (To put this in perspective, it was early June before we had this many members last year.) Sincere thanks to everyone who joined and a particular welcome to new members and welcome back to former members who have returned to the fold. Receipts and shoe tags may be picked up from the stewards after the club is open.

The drive for members is far from over, however. A promotional flyer is presently being prepared for wide distribution. Our objective for this year is a minimum of 400 members -- so for those who haven't joined there's no time like the present. An application form is enclosed and the rates are still a distinct bargain.

For those who have already joined please ignore the application form -- or better yet pass it on to a friend. Our old membership lists are woefully

incomplete, so you may well know of former members or potential new members whom we've missed in these appeals. Word-of-mouth is one of our best promotional tools.

Neighborhood Petition -- Subsequent to our general meeting it was discovered (through the initiative of member Jane Kelly) that the club property is zoned OS2 (Open Space). This means that in order to be sold as residential lots the property would have to be re-zoned, a process involving public hearings before Kingston's Planning Committee, City Council and ultimately the Ontario Municipal Board.

A neighborhood petition was organized by John Smith and Neil Neasmith, stating that the neighbors strongly support the retention of the club as recreational green space, and are opposed to any zoning change which will permit development on the site. Signed by 325 neighbours (over a 90% response from the houses polled), the petition was delivered to the Queen's administration in March.

Appeal to Queen's Board of Trustees -- A detailed letter and documentation outlining the club's position was presented to a meeting of the Finance Committee of the Queen's Board of Trustees on March 2. Our position is based on a letter from Queen's to the club at the time of the sale (1953). The letter states that the purchase of the club "is not a commercial proposition" and was undertaken "in the best interests of the tennis players of Kingston" and "good clean sport". It is also clear that the property was sold to Queen's at a substantial discount from its true market value on the understanding that tennis would continue on the site. (Appraised at between \$18,000 and \$25,000, the property was sold to Queen's for \$6,550.) The arguments for keeping the club on Napier St. were ably presented to the Finance Committee by club member (and Queen's Trustee) Michael Davies.

It is Queen's position that any legal obligation to allow the club to continue on Napier St. expired after 12 years. They also maintain that they are obliged to charge full market value rents on all their properties, the tennis club included. With the latest appraisal on the property at \$930,000 and using Queen's market value rent formula of 3.5%, this would require an annual rent of \$32,000, which the club could not conceivably pay.

Legal Advice -- The club is indebted Gordon Kaiser, a lawyer with Gowling, Strathy & Henderson of Toronto, and a former club member, who has taken our case for no fee. Mr. Kaiser has written to Queen's presenting our argument that the 1953 agreement constitutes a trust arrangement whereby the K.T.C. would be allowed to continue to use the property for the

purpose of tennis. Not surprisingly, Queen's disputes this interpretation and have replied that they are willing to go to court if necessary to defend their position.

Letters, Publicity etc. -- The club is grateful to members who have taken the time to write to Queen's administrators privately or to the newspaper to express their views on this matter. In addition there have been a number of recent pieces in the Whig Standard, the Globe and Mail, the Queen's Journal on CBC Radio and elsewhere presenting our side of the case -- as well as that of Queen's. If nothing else it is hoped that this publicity will make people more aware of the club and may generate some new memberships.

While not wishing to be obstructionist for obstruction's sake, the executive is trying, on behalf of the membership, to insure that the issue is fully aired and all legitimate avenues are explored from our standpoint. If there's anything we've overlooked, please let us know. We feel that all of these efforts have had an effect -- that is, to make it abundantly clear to Queen's that we're simply not going to fold our tents and go quietly.

New Lease -- As a result Queen's has recently offered us a new two-year lease effective January 1, 1990. The rent for this year is \$10,500 -- a 50% increase from last year, but one we believe we can handle if we can get the membership back up over 400.

We also now have the following commitment from Queen's in writing if and when the property is ever sold. "Queen's is committed to providing a tennis facility equal or superior to the existing facility at K.T.C. that would provide a clubhouse, lights and quality tennis surfaces at a site within close proximity to the existing location."

While this result is not perfect, we have come a long way from Queen's initial position of last summer -- which was simply to inform us that they were going to sell the property and to terminate our lease as of December 31, 1989. Period.

Although the short term future of the club is now secure, the long term remains cloudy. There is no doubt Queen's would still very much like to sell the Napier property some day and they firmly maintain their legal right to do so. At the same time they appear to be developing ambitious plans for West Campus, including an improved track, a new field house -- and an expanded and upgraded 12-court tennis facility.

When all of this will actually happen and exactly how it will affect the K.T.C. is not yet clear. Meanwhile the executive will continue with the dual track approach endorsed at the annual general meeting on August 29, 1989. That is, we will maintain our strong preference to continue on Napier Street, while at the same time using whatever influence we have with Queen's to insure that any alternative facility, if it in fact goes ahead, will be a good one.

While the matter is now resolved temporarily, there will undoubtedly be further developments and we will keep the membership informed as these occur.

My personal thanks to the many members who have helped out in large and small ways during a difficult period. And thanks again to those who have already joined for this year. To those who haven't -- please do. And let's enjoy a good, active summer of tennis on Napier Street.



Doug Bowie
President

LESSONS, PROGRAMS, TOURNAMENTS, SOCIALS ETC.

Details and dates of many club programs are still being finalized. Highlights will include --

*** Free Guest Pass Program -- In an effort to introduce more people to the club, any member may bring any Kingston guest to play once free. This is a painless way to show friends what the club has to offer, and we hope, to bring in some new members. There are no doubt still many people in Kingston who simply do not know about the club and apart from all our publicity efforts, members themselves are still the club's best ambassadors.

*** Two, count them, two highly qualified teaching pros, Robin Walker and Bill Parker. This should mean less waiting time for private and semi-private lessons which are always available and recommended for players of all levels. In addition there will be a full slate of group lessons for adults and juniors, beginners and intermediates, starting the week of May 14.

Check at the club for days and times. Bill and Robin will also run the summer junior development program, provide stringing services, etc.

*** An all new social committee -- with Fiona Gazenbeek and Danielle Charbonneau and (I'm told) new ideas. The success of these events depends largely on member participation and we're hopeful they'll be a more active part of the club this summer. In addition there will be a mixed singles league -- (the best way to meet new players) -- a doubles night, and more. Fresh ideas for club activities are always welcome.

*** The Eastern Ontario Open -- reinstated and scheduled for the weekend of July 7,8. Always a highlight in past years, this tournament draws top players from around the province and provides some outstanding tennis. In addition there will be a full slate of other tournaments for the regular club player (a.k.a. hackers) -- the always popular Jack Campbell Tournament on the weekend of July 15-17, inter-club challenges, singles and doubles club championships in July and August, the traditional Whig Standard Junior Tournament on Labour Day weekend, etc.

*** Please inquire at the club or watch the bulletin boards after April 28 for details on lessons, socials and all other club programs.

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*** And finally a special vote of thanks to our own MYM (Most Valuable Member) Jan Myslivecek for four beautifully resurfaced courts.

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*** CLEAN-UP DAY -- SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 10 AM.

Is there anything you'd rather do?

