

End of Year Message from the President



As we near the end of another eventful year, I believe that a pause to reminisce on some of the past successes and challenges is necessary.

2008 year kicked-off in a flurry of activity - one could hardly sit down for a much needed cup of solace, when the next challenge knocked on the door with many opportunities. Opportunities that had to be met with enthusiasm and determination, specially if we needed to convince our supporters that Table Tennis is a sport that is accessible to all: all rural communities, all genders and all disabilities. A sport that is highly technical for the elite athlete, but, at the same time can be enjoyed recreationally. A sport that breaks down barriers between young and old, rich and poor, able athletes and athletes with disabilities. Table Tennis is the embodiment of the Sport-for-all axiom.

It must be noted that the above would not have been possible without the generous support from our sponsors: the National Lotteries Distributing Trust Fund (NLDTF) Sports Recreation SA (SRSA), SASCO and Stag International.

It is against this background that we have convinced our stakeholders that Table Tennis can indeed hold its own in the face of International competition and at the same time, assist with the Transformation and Development processes within our structures around South Africa. Yes, Table Tennis still has a way to go as it pertains to International competition, but slowly, we are getting there. Our dream of becoming a recognised power on the Continent of Africa by 2014 is gathering momentum.

For me, besides the many projects that were successfully completed by SATTB, there were three highlights to the year where it concerns International participation by our Elite athletes.

INTERNATIONAL PLAY



It all started with the World Team Table Tennis Championships in Guangzhou, China, during the month of February. Our Women's Team did us proud by progressing to the 3rd Division. A proud moment indeed.

Not to be outdone, the Men's Team pulled themselves by their 'takkie' laces and consolidated their position in the men's 3rd Division with brilliant stroke play and electrifying rallies.

The post World Team Championships Training Camp that was held during the month of March did much to bolster our player's insight of the game. In the words of Fundiswa, the Team Manager: "It was an unforgettable experience. The knowledge gained from the Chinese Coaches is beyond words."

In May our Men's Team participated in the final qualification tournament held in Budapest, Hungary. It was at this event that Shane showed what he is made off - who can forget Overmeyer's titanic battle against Aleksandr Didukh in his quest for Olympic inclusion. This match was hailed by reporters as "Shane's match of a life time". Unfortunately it was not to be. Shane was defeated by the up-and-coming Englishman, Paul Drinkhall.



A special mention must be made of Moegamad Isaacs and Genevieve Lenz

for having represented SA as International Umpires at the Beijing Olympics and the Beijing Paralympics respectively. Well done.

And the third highlight occurred during the month of June, when our juniors participated in the U21 African Championships and African Singles Cup in Brazzaville, Congo. Our juniors did SA proud by walking off with numerous medals, acclaims and awards. The beaming faces of Coach Zhou and Team Manager Fundiswa told the story, and nothing but the story. Proud supporters there were a plenty to welcome the team home from their successful stint in Congo Brazzaville at O R Tambo International airport.

LOCAL PLAY

As for local successes, I must start with the 2008 SA Junior Inter-Regional Championships and Open Tournament. This year, Umgungundlovu played hosts to this tournament from the 29 June to the 5 July. The event was project managed by a dedicated task team and a special thanks to the organisers for a job well done. This event also produced many new Champions - the final showdown between Cody Meyer and Kurt Lingeveldt had the audience on their feet screaming for more.

Yet, amongst the above successes, it was disheartening to hear that, due to economic reasons, the SASAPD (disabled) juniors could not attend the Tournament but, given their special circumstances, sorrowfully understandable.

Next was the turn of the SA Disabled, Veteran and Senior Inter-Regional Tournament and Open Championships which was held during the cold periods of 27 September to the 3 October in Belhar, Cape Town. Congratulations to Western Province for organising a well run championship.

This Tournament produced amazing rallies, breathtaking stroke-play and electrifying away-from-the-table counter smashes that kept one riveted to the various matches on display. And the never-say-die attitude of the SASAPD senior athletes was awesome and inspiring.

If any one match stands out for me, it was the rivalry between Luke Abrahams and Theo Cogill during the Senior Men's finals that took my breath away. The intensiveness, the strategy and the focus exhibited by both players was nothing short of outstanding and astonishing. Congratulations to Luke for lifting the crown after five (5) attempts – truly a deserved winner. The same applies to Sameera Maal who won the Senior Ladies singles crown for the fifth (5th) consecutive year.



End-of-Year Activities



Being the proud recipients of Lotto funding, our end-of-year schedule was bustling with activities. The whole gamut kicked off on the 2 December with two specialised training camps for the U14 and U17 squad at the Groenkloof Campus, Tshwane (2 - 5 December.) This was followed by a Coaching Seminar from the 6 - 7 December and a Technical Officials Seminar from 15 - 16 December.

The other initiative that was thrown our way when Angola could not cope with the demands of hosting a tournament, was the hosting of the 2008 Confederation Zone VI Championships. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, holiday schedules and other seasonal circumstances, the Zone VI Championships were called off. So much the pity but there is always 2009.

GLUE ANNOUNCEMENT

Given all the goings on at the Headquarters of ITTF, our first experience will be the implementation of the application of Non Volatile Solvent glue and boosters/modifiers rule, which comes into effect from the 1 of January 2009 in South Africa. This rule has been implemented to great satisfaction around the Junior Circuits as from the beginnings of 2008, and around the Senior Circuits from the 1 September.



As a rule, the intention is to firstly make the sport safer from an inhalation point of view – to have youngsters inhaling Toxic solvents during daily gluing processes was a medical no-no that has now been eradicated. And secondly, to level the playing field by ensuring that all players play with ITTF acceptable equipment.

As it is the player's responsibility to ensure that all Rules and Regulations are adhered too, buying racket coverings with a maximum thickness of 4mm and then treating them with 'boosters' could lead to having said racket declared illegal if the racket covering is swollen past the 4mm allowance. Take care!

For further information refer to:

<http://www.tabletennis.co.za/Documents/Racket%20Control%202009.pdf>

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The South African Table Tennis Board is awaiting the final decision of whether we will still enjoy the status of a recognised priority sport by SRSA, NLDTF and SASCOC. It remains imperative that we all work at developing the game of Table Tennis at all levels and within all the provinces and regions.



As for International activities, SATTB remains committed to exposing its elite athletes to the upper echelons of competitive play to ensure growth and developmental expertise.

As circumstances stand, the Ethekwini Table Tennis Association of KZN will be hosting the 2009 SA Junior Championships at the University of Westville during the month of July, and the friendly province of the North West, the 2009 SA SASAPD, Veteran and Senior Combined Championships during the month of September.

SASCOC

We have once again been honoured by the re-election of Ms Hajera Kajee as the 1st Vice President of SASCOC. Hajera serves to inspire all Federations, who are often considered "Cinderella" Sport Codes in South Africa, with her anything-is-possible attitude, that anyone can reach the top.

We wish the new President Gideon Sam and his Executive Committee all the best for the future. We know that under his leadership we can expect to see a greater emphasis on transformation of sport in our country, whilst simultaneously ensuring that we provide our Elite athletes the best support possible as we strive for greater glory at the World's Premier Events.



A 2008 YEAR END MESSAGE

I take this opportunity to express my deep felt gratitude to the hundreds of volunteers in every part of our country, who continue serving the table tennis communities with time and limited financial resources. You make our sport a truly representative body encapsulating the spirit of Ubuntu – I am because we are.

In keeping with the vision of involvement, SATTB will continue to secure the services and or assistance from any other sources as and when necessary.

Given the above, SATTB has contracted the services of Mr Gavin Heffer to update the website, Mr Filipe Nunes to assist with special projects, and Mr Haroen Khan to assist with Community Development and Schools projects.

I hereby thank the members of the National Executive Committee, Hajera Kajee, Audrey Mac Donald, Fikile Diko, Arthur Williams, Brian Buckton and Clement Meyer for their support and commitment to their portfolios during the past season.

A special word of thanks to Fundiswa Hlobo, Coach Zhou and Shane Overmeyer that are based at the High Performance Centre at Tukkie's, for their dedication in ensuring that our athletes at the HPC are well supported in their quest for excellence.

A special thanks to Helen Edinberry for working under very difficult conditions, and specially during the periods when she was the only resource in the Administration Office.

SATTB feels great satisfaction that various projects have successfully come to completion, and significant progress has been made in those that continue. Those projects that continue will be tackled with renewed vigour in 2009.

As we take leave of 2008, it is time to start a new chapter, to turn over a new leaf, inspired by our past, invigorated by the present and mindful of the future.

SATTB wishes each and everyone of you, a safe and peaceful holiday season and hope that you spend this well deserved break with your family and friends.

The Administration Office will be closing on the 19th December 2008 for a well deserved break, and will reopen on the 12th January 2009 !!!!!!!

Kind Regards

Ganief Fataar
President
SATTB