



100 YEARS OF TENNIS ACT

Pre 1923

The Establishment Years

“ANYONE FOR TENNIS?”

- Courts are established on settler properties and villiages from the late 1800s, with Queanbeyan the regional hub
- On 12 March 1913 Lady Denman, a keen tennis player and wife of the Governor-General, stands on Capital Hill and declares “I name the capital of Australia, Canberra”
- As infrastructure for Canberra is built, tennis courts of varying quality are constructed at a variety of locations, from construction camps to the centre of ‘administration’ at Acton
- The first recorded club ‘championship’ in the new capital is held at Duntroon on 25 September 1915, the club having been established in 1911

In the late 1890s The Wizards Ginnindera Notes of the Goulburn Evening Penny Post reported that *‘Hall tennis members were practicing assiduously in order to wipe out two defeats they had suffered at the hands of Sutton players.’*

↓ The Pines,
Lyneham
c.1900





1923-1932

The Organising Years

CLUBS AND COMPETITIONS EMERGE

- On 21 March 1993 - Federal Territory Tennis Association (FTTA) is formed, with Jack Esmond as President 19
- **1923** Pennant competition commences amongst five affiliated clubs - Canberra, Eastlake, Northbourne, West Ridge and the first ever winner, Queanbeyan
- **1925** name changes to Canberra Tennis Association (CTA)
- **1927** affiliation with NSWLTA enables entry to Country Week Championships, with Canberra's #1 team victorious
- **1928** six gravel-court Manuka complex open as headquarters of CTA
- **1930** name changes to Federal Capital Territory Lawn Tennis Association (FCTLTA) and the next year disaffiliates with NSW
- **1930** first ACT Open Championship - men's winner S Gee (J Ridley Cup) and women's winner, V Kemp (W Sandral Cup)

The Association Annual Ball was held on 18 July 1930 as a gala affair with a theme of *'Romance of the Night'* with guests enjoying *'the full Ambassador's Orchestra and a delectable supper'* and all this to *'ensure patrons had a night of undiluted joy'*.



1933-1942

The Growth Years

ACT IS OFFICIALLY 'TENNIS MAD'

- **1933** Manuka Pavilion opens in conjunction with first ACT Resident Championships – winners Men, S Bell (Johnson Cup) and Women L Yates (Piggin Cup)
- **1934 – 1938** exhibition matches involving Viv McGrath, Jack Crawford, John Bromwich, Arthur Huxley, Bill Sidwell, Joan Hartigan, and Thelma Rice at Manuka and Hotel Canberra
- **1936** player registrations peak at 929, approximately 10% of Canberra's population – more than the number of those with a driver's licence
- **1939** name changes to Australian Capital Territory Lawn Tennis Association (ACTLTA)
- **1940** Joan Shumack (later Le Nevez) wins the last of her 6 ACT Resident Singles titles and 3 ACT Open Singles titles, marries and leaves the ACT
- **1942** tennis competition ceases in Canberra
- **1930** first ACT Open Championship – men's winner S Gee (J Ridley Cup) and women's winner, V Kemp (W Sandral Cup)

'...We arrived [in Canberra] at 4 on Saturday afternoon. Tennis was being played here, there and everywhere. "We're tennis mad!" was the reply to a query. There were 37 teams in competition that afternoon in connection with the Association, in addition to private play'.

Cootamundra Herald, 11 May 1934

↓ Exhibition
on Hotel of
Canberra
Bowling
Green,
1935



1943-1952

The Disrupted Years

WAR'S DRAMATIC IMPACT

- **1943** Association must renegotiate lease of Manuka courts due to dire financial situation
- **1945** Resident Championships return
- **1946** Resumption of ACT Open Championship
- **1949** first Life Memberships of Association to Les Crawley, Keith Carnall, Charlie Gibbs and FA Piggin
- **1949** reaffiliation with NSWLTA
- **1951** Davis Cup displayed in Canberra

The year 1942 was the first year in the history of tennis in Canberra that no competition was held due to the depletion of players because of enlistment, petrol rationing and other related war activity.

The situation worsened in 1943, with difficulties in obtaining quorums for association meetings, the parlous state of association and club finances, the lack of tennis balls and hoses caused by the shortage of rubber.

The Manuka courts were *'in a deplorable state'* with fencing down and the pavilion windows broken by vandals.

↓ Davis Cup,
Canberra
1951





1953-1962

The Rebound Years

A TASTE OF THE PROS

- **1953** exhibition match at Manuka by Wimbledon Champion Maureen (Little Mo) Connolly
- **1955** Roy Emerson ACT Men's Open Singles Champion (again in 1958) and Fred Stolle Junior Boys Champion
- **1959** Neale Fraser Men's Open Singles winner (again in 1960)
- **1959** Kramer Professional Troupe Exhibition on Manuka Oval – Pancho Gonzales, Lew Hoad, Ashley Cooper and Mal Anderson
- **1961** Reg 'Blackie' Bennett wins the last of a record 22 Resident Titles and ACT Open titles
- **1962** Margaret Smith wins ACT Open Singles, Doubles and Mixed titles

The Queanbeyan News reported on 23 April 1954*ROBERT BROS STOLE SHOW IN EASTER TOURNAMENT!*

“In a thrilling Open Doubles final in the Eden-Monaro Open Peter and Cres Roberts of Canberra scored a big upset by defeating [Sydney Stars] and No. 1 seeded pair Max Anderson and Trevor Davis. All four players veritably ‘climbed the wire netting’ at the back of the court in their excellent retrieving work. The skilful play, exciting rallies and closeness of the scores, kept onlookers at *‘fever pitch’*. The Robert Bros have stamped themselves as one of the finest doubles combinations playing in NSW country districts.”

↓ Childers St
Tennis Courts,
late 1950s





1963-1972

The 'Golden' Years

PRESIDENTS, COACHES AND EMERGING JUNIORS DEFINE AN ERA

- **1963** Start of the Willis Presidency - 1963-1977
- **1963** Peter Roberts wins the last of nine Resident Doubles titles in a career also including 7 Resident Singles and one Mixed title
- **1966** Bruce Larkham NSW Country Singles Champion and in 1968 NSW Hardcourt Doubles Champion (with Dick Crealy) becoming the first ACT player to win a NSW title
- **1969** last Open Championship to be held at Manuka with winners John Alexander and Evonne Goolagong
- **1970** ACTLTA moves to Lyneham, with the National Tennis and Squash Centre (NTSC) officially opened by Patron, Sir John Overall
- **1970** new Association Coach Charlie Hollis arrives in ACT

The arrival of the Association's new coach Charlie Hollis, heralded a golden era for junior tennis in Canberra. The man who Rod Laver wrote of - *'so influential was he that I have no problem saying that if Charlie and my paths hadn't crossed I may never have become an elite tennis player'*, coached in Canberra for 12 years.

Ken Willis in his Foundation Dinner address in 1980, celebrating 50 years of the ACT Open, wrote *'his [Charlie Hollis's] juniors and those of the other coaches are now in Australian and World Class. Young Wally Masur made the Quarter Finals at the Wimbledon Junior Event this year and he has always been an Australian Champion for his age. Charlie Hollis must be given the major credit for the lifting of tennis playing standards in Canberra in the last decade'*.



↓ Evonne Goolagong

1973-1982

The Progressive Years

THE ARCHITECT OF MODERN WOMENS' TENNIS IN THE ACT

- **1973** sees the Golden Jubilee of the Association – from the initial five affiliated clubs in 1923 to 20 in 1973
- **1975** Bruce Larkham wins a record eighth Resident Singles title and Barbra Winder (nee Walsh) wins the last of six Resident Women's Singles titles
- **1979** name change to Australian Capital Territory Tennis Association (ACTTA)
- **1980** Opening of AIS with tennis, under Ray Ruffles as National Coach
- **1980** Helen Holcombe, Pat McNicol, Kay Schiavinato, Narelle Raftery win Div 1 Country Week
- **1980** Wally Masur first ACT Junior to represent NSW in Linton Cup
- **1981** Alison Ide Life Member
- **1982** Charles Boag first ACT Veteran selected in Australian Veterans team competing in an international event

'In his book on the tennis history of Canberra, Roy Smalley wrote, "*she [Alison Ide] can rightly be described as the architect of modernising womens tennis in the ACT*". A full womens tennis program was developed, and the Ladies Auxiliary elevated from its historical connotation as 'tea ladies' to branch status, with its President becoming a full Tennis Association Vice-President, Board member and member of the Grading Committee.'

↓ Country
Week 1980



1983-1992

The Expansion Years

OPENING UP BORDERS AND BREAKING DOWN BOUNDARIES

- **1983** Pat McNicol first ACT Senior Woman to represent Australia
- **1984** Woman refused entry to men's pennant competition, which was reversed in 1987
- **1984** second Rio Challenge held in Canberra featuring Ivan Lendl, Mats Wilander, Joachim Nystrom and Pat Cash
- **1985** Wally Masur first ACT player selected in a Davis Cup team and later Rebecca Bryant selected in Federation Cup Squad (1987)
- **1990** Kay Schiavinato member of first Australian seniors team to win International Cup and then ACT's first individual World Veteran Champion

'It is not so long ago that the idea that the top woman player in the ACT should be allowed to play in the sacred mens singles competition was greeted with shock, horror and derision. Now in a quiet revolution, the principle seems to have accepted...some days ago there were matches going on simultaneously on adjoining courts. ' WARDEN'S WAFFLE, SET POINT, November 1987.

↓ ACT Residents
Championships
1983



1993-2002

The Player Years

LOCAL TALENT SHINES AT HOME AND ON WORLD STAGE

- **1993** Wally Masur reaches career high World Singles ranking of No15 and in Doubles No 8
- **1993** Annabel Ellwood, Jodi Richardson and Jenny Popovic win Wilson Cup and Annabel and Jodi members of Australian Junior team, coached by Helen Gourlay which won the World Youth Cup
- **1994** ACT gains voting rights on LTAA
- **1994** Ben Ellwood wins Boys Doubles and Singles at Australian Open and Boys Doubles at Wimbledon and US Open. Ranked No 1 Junior in the World
- **1996** Ros Balodis wins a record 8th Womens Resident Singles title
- **1997** Annabel Ellwood reaches career high World Singles ranking of No57; in 1997/98 representing Australia in three Federation Cup ties and in the Hopman Cup
- **2001** inaugural Canberra International WTA event in Canberra, won by Justine Henin

Prior to her clean sweep in the Helsinki World Seniors Championships in 2017 noted sports journalist Jeff Kavanagh, in describing Ros Balodis as a master of her art wrote *“Ros Balodis probably doesn’t conform to most people’s mental picture of a top flight tennis player. There’s no gold chain dangling from her neck, branded headwear of flamboyant flourishes of her racquet. Instead, behind the façade, a precise approach to shot-making and the heart and mind of a fine practitioner of her sport”*.

↓ Annabel Ellwood
with Pat Rafter
1998



2003-2012

The Performance Years

ELITE COACHING AND ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH

- **2006** ACT High Performance program introduced with Todd Larkham as full-time coach
- **2007** New constitution with transition from association to company, Tennis ACT 'limited by guarantee' and registered under the Corporations Act
- **2008** New board structure and the end of the National Sports Club
- **2012** John Blom achieves world Gold Badge umpire status

In 2006 the ANU Great Hall was packed for a special tribute dinner to honour Alison Ide. Alison spent the evening reminiscing of her tennis memories in Canberra; a fitting acknowledgement for the women known and the *'head mistress'* – a born organiser, high achiever, and genuine Canberra sporting legend.



↓ Optus
ACT Team

100 YEARS OF TENNIS ACT



2013-2023

The Thriving Years

MATURITY AND RESILIENCE

- **2013** Nick Kyrgios wins Australian Open Junior Singles, makes Davis Cup debut and in
- **2014** wins the Newcombe Medal
- **2015** Opening of new Lyneham Tennis Centre by Chief Minister Andrew Barr
- **2015** Wally Masur captain of Australian Davis Cup team
- **2015/16** return of professional tennis to Canberra with Canberra International, Canberra ATP Challenger and ACT Claycourt International
- **2016** Nick Kyrgios reaches a career high World ranking of No13, becoming the highest ever ranked ACT player
- **2016** Establishment of ACT Tennis Walk of Fame with inaugural inductees, Wally Masur, Ken Willis and Keith Carnall
- **2018** Australia, lead by Ash Barty, wins Federation Cup tie 3 - 2 over Ukraine at Lyneham
- **2020** Canberra International 2020 moved to Bendigo two days prior to the start due to bushfire activity in the ACT and region
- **2020** all tournaments, events and court play cancelled under health regulations due to COVID19
- **2022** Nick Kyrgios wins Australian Open Doubles with Thanasi Kokkinakis, first Canberran to win a Grand Slam title, and later to reach a Wimbledon Singles Final
- **2023** 100 Years of Tennis ACT

↓ Federation Cup
Australia vs
Ukraine 2018

