

# Riverside News

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## Valet Jim Witheford

We are deeply saddened by the passing of our life member, former club president and committee member and wonderful friend Jim Witheford. This edition of the Riverside News is dedicated to the tremendous contribution that Jim made to our club over many years.



Jim in 1965 (top left) as a member of the first ever winning Riverside team



Jim welcoming Japanese visitors in 2003



Jim presenting a life membership to Lesley Baird in 2007

## Message from the UK

As many members would be aware Jim was a regular visitor to the UK, recently staying with his good friend Margaret in Durham and of course you couldn't keep him off the tennis courts or golf course. This lovely email was sent from the Durham Archery and Tennis Club:

*Hi Rod*

*My name is Prue Mackee and I am emailing you from Durham UK as I have just heard about the sad death of Jim Witheford. I had a lovely email from him just before Christmas, he was telling me all about his specialist appointment this month and that he was so hoping to re visit his friend Margaret in Durham and of course Durham Archery Lawn Tennis Club where he comes to play whilst staying in Durham.*

*He was a real character and it was a privilege to meet him and to have played tennis with him too. He had obviously been a good player in his youth, and despite his mobility problems he could still hit some excellent ground strokes.*

*I was so sad to here he had died, but he died doing what he loved, playing tennis. We will miss him at DALTC and will raise a glass to him at our AGM.*

*With very best wishes*

*Prue Mackee on behalf of DALTC*

## Holding Court – Jim Witheford

The following article was published in the Examiner in 2010 and reproduced on the Tennis Tasmania website after Jim stepped down as Riverside Club President.

VOLUNTEERS are what make the sporting world go round, and Jim Witheford has been a prominent cog in the Riverside Tennis Club for more than 45 years. Born in Sheffield, England, in April 1930, Witheford moved to Australia with his family in 1965, and ever since then he has been a larger-than-life member of both the tennis club and the Launceston United Soccer Club.

When Witheford, wife June and their two sons first came Down Under, they found residency in a department house on the Mayfield Primary School grounds before relocating to Riverside – where they have been nestled for the past 41 years. For 37 years Witheford made a living as physical education teacher, teaching in England, at Brooks and Queechy between 1953 and 1990.

Sport has always played a significant role in the modest but talented sportsman's life. "I played third division soccer in England, which is pretty high, and I played A-grade tennis here – but I was never really a good tennis player." "I was a better badminton player when I was younger, but I had to give it up, because you know what badminton is like – it could finish at one o'clock in the morning and I couldn't get home, so I changed to playing basketball when I was at college. "I played basketball until I was 65, so I have always been involved in sport."

Within a week of Witheford living in Tasmania, he and his family were heavily involved in the tennis and soccer clubs. For 26 years, Witheford was the founding member and secretary of high school soccer and is a life member of Launceston United Soccer Club, but tennis is his number one sport today. After a 27-year reign as president of his beloved tennis club, Witheford recently stepped aside from the top job. Out of the almost three decades he was running the place, 23 years of them were in succession.

"I have always been involved in the administration of sport, ever since I was very, very young at school," he said. "During the war all of our male teachers were away, so somebody had to organise the cricket, the football and all of that sort of thing – so I was one of the lads who said 'give us a few balls and bats and we will organise it'.

"That's how I started and all through my life in the air force, when I was at college and when I have been teaching I have always been involved in committee work of some sort – mainly soccer, but tennis, athletics and basketball as well."

Tennis has always been Witheford's second sport, but said the tennis club allowed his family to settle down and make life-long friends. "It has been a second home for our family – me and my boys played, my wife played and we have helped develop this from what used to be only two court club," he said. "We helped build the bottom two courts, we helped build this club house and over the years it has just been the place where we have gravitated to every weekend just about."

At age 80, Witheford still plays tennis every Saturday, Sunday and sometimes Mondays, as well as a round golf in the warmer months. "The thing that pleases me the most is that I am still playing on Sunday's with the better players – I'm not as good as they are, but at least I'm with them every week and I feel as if I can hold my own."

Being around the club and in a joyful environment has produced many highlights for the accomplished sportsman and loyal clubman including the re- development of the tennis courts. The third court at the Riverside Tennis Club has been named after Witheford, in recognition for his contributions in developing the club that has been around since 1961. "They named one of the courts after me and it's there forever, I suppose, and probably 20 years from now people will say 'who's he?'" he joked.

"The more recent highlight for me in my time here came in April, when I turned 80 and the club put on a huge do here, a huge day of tennis for the club members and also veterans tennis. "I am a life member of the veterans association as well and they came from all over the state. "So there were about 50 or 60 people here and they very optimistically bought me a new tennis racquet at aged 80 and two rounds of golf at Barnbougle."

When he was 45, Witheford started playing golf and now he is off "a handy cap of about 20 in the summer and 22 in the winter", with a hole-in-one trophy on the mantelpiece.

The highlight of the skilful third division Chesterfield Football Club player's local soccer life was when he set an impressive record playing for Launceston United. "I actually hold the record for the most amount of goals scored in an A-grade game, which is 10," he said. "I had been playing in the reserves and the following week after the 10 goals I got dropped back to the reserves again – I was 42 at the time though.

"I played soccer for about 40 years and I never got a yellow card and I never got a red card, but these day I might because the rules have changed and some of the rules are a little bit silly." Although Witheford has stepped aside as president, he is still on the committee and will forever be an influential figure not only around the tennis club, but Launceston United as well.

When asked whether he will continue to play tennis he replied: "I guess so, I have got to wear this new racquet out."

**Corey Martin – The Examiner**

Please send tennis news items to [rodmeldrum@hotmail.com](mailto:rodmeldrum@hotmail.com) or call 0409 428 282

## Riverside Tennis Club 50 Years on

In 2010 Jim documented the 50 year history of the Riverside Tennis Club in *Riverside Tennis Club 50 years on*. This story has been posted to the Riverside Tennis Club website in memory of the hours Jim spent putting the document together:

<https://www.tennis.com.au/riversidetc/files/2010/09/Riverside-Tennis-Club-History-50-Years-On.pdf>

## Coaching

Jason Fletcher conducts coaching at our club throughout the week. Please contact him on 0437 338 518 for more information regarding his program options.

## Launceston Tennis International (3-10 February 2018)

The 2018 Launceston International is on again in the first week of February with a number of new initiatives including a designated food and beverage area. Riverside Tennis Club has traditionally provided many of the volunteers to make this event a success – volunteering is a great way to watch and meet up and coming players and of course it's a great social occasion! If you are interested in volunteering again (or for the first time) please click on the link below, print it out and fill in the form - or contact Rod via email [rodmeldrum@hotmail.com](mailto:rodmeldrum@hotmail.com).

[https://www.tennis.com.au/riversidetc/files/2010/09/Volunteer\\_EOI.pdf](https://www.tennis.com.au/riversidetc/files/2010/09/Volunteer_EOI.pdf)

## Riverside Club Committee

**President** – Marty Howell

**Vice President** – Max Byrne

**Treasurer** – Linda de Water

**Secretary** – Judy Cole

**Club Room Coordinator** – Pauline Baker

**Club Captain** – Owen Geale

**Ladies Captain** – Roxy Holden

**Maintenance Officer** – Max Byrne

**Communications Officer** – Rod Meldrum

**General Committee Members**

Ben Holden

Lyn Garner