

CLOTHIER/VAN ALEN CUP REPORT

By Paul Monaghan & Dylan Ward

After flying for 20 hours and traveling a total of 10,353 miles, the US Clothier & Van Alen Cup team landed in Melbourne ready to take on a pair of strong British and Australian squads. We were carted from the airport to the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club to meet our hosts and get a tour of the club. The teams spent most of the first day getting situated with their host families and stretching out our jet-lagged bodies.

We spent that evening with the British and Aussie team, meandering a few blocks away from the RMTC over to The English Pub where we heard various forms of English “banter,” and enjoyed some Aussie pub cuisine and drinks.

We had the court booked for 4 hours the next afternoon. Given we had the morning free, those of us who woke up noon—which proved a bit unseemly for some—wandered down to the center of Melbourne to see the sights. The center of Melbourne seems to have at least two coffee shops per block, which meant that we had to try at least a few before heading back to the RMTC. Fully pumped up on the coffee sampling we had done downtown, The Team had a particularly energetic practice.

We split into pairs, playing sets of doubles to figure out particular strategies for our matches later in the week. The guys definitely felt more comfortable than the day before, as the jet lag progressively wore off we all began hitting fewer frames. The matches against the GB and AUS teams would be a struggle, regardless we were all excited, looking forward to the challenge.

Matches began the next day with the Clothier Cup. Opening at 10:00am, Adrian Camacho represented the US Team against Australia’s #4 Simon Carr. Adrian fought valiantly, falling in straight sets. Next on was Laurenson Ward vs. James Gould, a match with a good deal of flare from both sides. With a number of games going deuce, James pushed shots just out of Laurenson’s reach. The next match, a Battle of the Paul’s, wrought a number of creative shots from both ends. American #2 and Captain, Paul Monaghan, defended consecutive forces from Aussie #2, Paul Rosedale, taking some crucial and extended rallies. American #1, Dylan Ward, played Australian #1, Michael Williams in the final singles match of the day. Michael Williams, known as Real Tennis’s answer to Lawn Tennis power hitter John Isner, pulled out all the stops with relentless muscle-flexing straight forces off the serve. Having his face nearly rearranged on a number of shots, Dylan aptly avoided some close calls, craftily putting together rallies to put Michael on the defensive. Ultimately, the Aussies retained the Clothier Cup, though all eagerly anticipated the next day’s program.

The Van Alen Cup was slated for the second day of play, as the United States faced off against a strong British side. The day’s matches began with the 4-seeds facing off, as Adrian Camacho battled against Britain’s Charlie Braham. Braham, the youngest player in the competition, looked comfortable on court as he cruised to a straight set victory. The 3-seed match featured Laurenson Ward against Jamie Giddins.

Giddins, well-known as a racquets player, has begun a foray into the game of court tennis and is already quite successful. Both he and Laurenson played a grueling match and Jamie was ultimately successful. The third match of the day was highly anticipated, as players from two opposite ends of the spectrum were facing off. Paul "Boom Boom" Monaghan was set to play against Benjamin "2nd gallery" Boddington, a true power vs. precision matchup. Paul began the first set strongly and tied it at 2-2, but Ben made great adjustments and ran away with the set. He continued his surgical play and took the next set as well. The final match of the day, featuring the #1s, pitted Dylan Ward against Ed Kay. Dylan, being a great squash player, typically likes to build off of long rallies. Ed figured this out quite quickly and played as any great British player would. He began using the galleries on both sides to his advantage and took both of the first two sets to win the match. At the end of the day, the British were victorious and took the Van Alen Cup.

The best part of the week was, without a doubt, the Australian rules football match, or "footy" as it's more commonly known. The RMTC had organized tickets for all of the players as well as access to the members' area for before the match. Following the first day of play in the Limb Cup, there was a mass exodus from the club over to "The G". The G is a very well known cricket ground in Melbourne, as it was the centerpiece stadium of the 1956 Olympics. The match scheduled that day was Collingwood vs Hawthorne, two very strong teams (or so I was told!). Both the American and British teams spent the majority of the match in confusion, as we had to learn on the fly.

To cap the whole week off, the RMTC threw a huge dinner for the final night of the tournament. Following hors d'oeuvres and drinks, around 60 people gathered near the courts and sat for dinner. Each of the teams' captains was called up to give speeches, in which jabs at the other teams were almost mandatory. It just so happened that the dinner fell on July 4th as well. As plates were being cleared, the American team was called up as the national anthem was played over the club's speakers. As the Brits and Aussies looked on, we belted out the lyrics as best we could. Not sure if it beat a good barbecue and fireworks but it certainly came close. Overall the trip was truly an incredible experience. The teams all got along well and it made for a great week of both tennis and nightlife.