

Warrnambool Tour 2008

On 31st March 2008 a group of Victorian Tennis Academy students set off to conquer the Warrnambool Indoor Junior Classic. Previous teams had recorded tremendous success – so the 2008 squad had big shoes to fill. Pictured right is the team preparing to board the train for the long journey to Warrnambool. Just out of picture are the “tearful” parents as they farewell their darling children.



Upon arriving in Warrnambool we quickly got into a training session to familiarise ourselves with local conditions. The indoor courts were new to many tourists so it was a major advantage to have the chance to experience the conditions – later in the tour we found just how lucky we were to be indoors as the weather turned treacherous. The team photo shows a confident and happy group before they go into battle.



The team motto for the trip was “never give in - there is no finish line.” Kipp Davenport, pictured here stretching every muscle to reach the ball, encapsulated our motto beating the #1 seed after being down 4 – 7. James Murray and Annabel Rothfield also won from behind and the determination displayed by every player was very impressive. The major highlight of the first day was Cluney McPherson winning 6 matches in a row and finishing after 8pm.



One of the most exciting aspects of our students performance was their excellent serving – the most important shot in the game. Harry Higgins shows his excellent technique in this photo and he was one of many players who served particularly well. On the back of some great serving six VTA members reached finals in a great start to the trip.



We were greeted the next day by some of the most wild conditions imaginable and wind gusts in Warrnamabool reached 167 km/h. Fortunately we had cancelled our reservation at the camp site in favour of a motel. Unfortunately "Cookie" and Nick were crushed by a falling tree in the conditions (pictured) – happily they made a miraculous recovery and were able to play on almost immediately.



Day 2 of the tournament delivered just as many positive results. Our girls team have been dubbed the "Golden Girls" for their performances. Their combined efforts delivered 11 titles over singles, doubles and mixed doubles – besting even their outstanding efforts from 2007. There are some very talented players in the group and we look forward to their development this year and in the future.



Amongst the many highlights of the trip are Victoria's best toasted sandwich's – which are very popular energy food amongst the team. Other non – tennis highlights included games of poker and spotlight; as well as trips to the Aquatic Centre and the best hamburgers in Victorian from Kermitt's. Everyone also enjoyed Cluney and James birthday cakes on Monday night as well as Ric's sensational BBQ efforts.



After 2 good days in singles we were looking forwards to the doubles where our superior teamwork would be crucial. The spirit between players was evident (as pictured right) as our players surged towards four titles and two runners up in the doubles events. Many teams also reached the semi finals and as always the mixed doubles was a highlight. Mixed doubles is too rare in modern junior tournaments – but is a great tennis and social learning experience which the kids love!



The final day was packed full of highlights as the VTA won a total of 12 titles and many runners up awards as well. The satisfied group is pictured here with their haul of awards which created some serious excess baggage problems on the way home. Just as important to our winning ways was the superb sportsmanship and attitude of our players which gained them many new friendships in Warrnambool.



No trip to Warrnambool would be complete without a visit to the adventure playground. The flying fox is always a favourite and a very serious game of footy also broke out. Kipp "Jezza" Davenport took mark of the day while the Rothfield girls showed the skill their beloved Demons need. After a long stop at the milk bar we were ready to jump on board the train and head home.



The students of the trip were extremely well behaved and co-operative and they should all be congratulated. This aspect is most important to the coaches and many students rated their highlight of the trip becoming closer friends with their team mates such was the comradarie between the group.

Special mention must go to the team captains Hugo Denton and Charlie Gibson. They were always ready to help the coaches and set a fantastic example for their team mates to follow. The VTA is lucky to have two such fantastic people on board. Nick Wittner was also a tremendous help in his role as official photographer. A full catalogue of pictures will be posted on the web site for people to browse and download.

On the court Mimi Gibson was terrific! She won all four of the events she contested – which is a first for VTA students at the tournament. As a result of her efforts she wins a special tennis sponsorship to support her tennis ambitions for 2008.

Finally the coveted Team Player of the Tour trophy was awarded to Becky Rothfield. She won the U12 singles and was runner up in the U13 singles and played an exciting aggressive game. Just as importantly her delightful personality and behaviour made everyone on the tour enjoy themselves that much more. Well done Becky and all the best with your tennis in the future.