

# RETHINKING TENNIS FOR THE BIG SOCIETY

*Reversing decline*

*Broadening the base*

*Unleashing social enterprise*



By Dan Lewis

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# Economic Policy Centre

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## About the author

**Dan Lewis** has been playing amateur tennis for 25 years and was born in Wimbledon. Today he is Chief Executive of the Economic Policy Centre which he launched after six years as Research Director of the Economic Research Council. He is also the Chief Executive and Co-Founder of Future Energy Strategies [www.future-es.com](http://www.future-es.com) and contributes frequently to the media on public policy and energy matters, including Sky, BBC and Al-Jazeera TV and writes from time to time for the specialist trade press, like E&T magazine, as well as mainstream regional, national and international magazines and papers such as the Yorkshire Post, World Finance Magazine, Daily Telegraph and the Wall Street Journal. The EPC's latest application, [www.ukcrimestats.com](http://www.ukcrimestats.com) is the UK's only free to view crime-ranking and crime heatmap platform for constituencies, neighbourhoods and streets.

## Executive Summary

### PART 1: The Tennis State We're In

#### Historical backdrop

- The modern game of tennis was a Victorian patented invention and codified in England
- It was originally for the social elite
- It quickly spread abroad and across the country to the middle classes
- Many park tennis courts were built and funded by the third sector in the interwar period by charities like the National Playing Fields Association
- The 1930s were the high watermark for British tennis participation and performance when there were 2 to 3 times more players
- Today's barriers to entry to tennis are not inconsiderable but can be hugely offset with lower cost initial access to non-tennis club venues

#### Why tennis?

- Tennis has social benefits – specifically bridging social capital
- The superior physical benefits derive from the stop-start, high intensity of the game
- The psychological benefits are from the simultaneous combination of mentally and physically demanding work

#### The UK Tennis Sector

- Is worth £1.2 billion per year and has 437,000 regular players
- And ranks fourth only behind Golf, Horse Racing and Soccer
- The largest contributing segments are TV Rights at £425m and Sponsorship at £375m
- Today's (amateur) British tennis players represent a much wider spread of society than other sports
- And 72% of players are aged 42 or less
- Those who don't play much are over 42 and at or near the lower socio-economic groups

### PART 2: What's gone wrong – finances

- In 2010 the LTA Group had a turnover of £53m of which £31m was from Wimbledon and £8m from Sport England
- In 2010 the second largest item of expenditure was on supporting British professional tennis players - £13.3m
- The LTA lacks a simple mission statement and purpose
- The LTA has too many committees and panels with allegedly some very high salaries
- Wimbledon is the resource curse that has made such incompetence possible
- Private tennis clubs have become stunted silos that can't grow much
- Park tennis has been wilfully ignored throughout the post-war period and the number of these courts available declined from 33,000 to 10,000
- The public funding from Sport England and directed by the Tennis Foundation has not done enough to promote Park Tennis which make up 40% of the UK's tennis courts
- But has instead prioritised the subsidy of low cost alternative clubs – Beacon sites – where there were often free tennis courts

### PART 3: What's gone wrong – the élite emphasis

- Tennis champions are like Nassim Nicholas Taleb's black swans – unpredictable, unconventional and almost never the product of a top-down system
- The last 3 British tennis players to be in the top 10 – Murray, Rusedski, Henman – did so with little to no involvement from the LTA
- Focussing resources on creating champions not only doesn't work – it's very expensive and comes at a great indirect cost to the growth of the amateur game
- As such, the £40m National Tennis Centre is a white elephant
- Widening the net and getting more people playing should be the priority of the LTA
- The French Tennis Federation shows what wide participation could look like and keeps close - and free to view - metrics on progress

#### **PART 4: A positive, alternative, high growth future for British Tennis**

- British Tennis's decline in participation and performance is far from an unrecoverable situation
- The bounceback potential with social, economic and professional benefits are huge
- The Big Society is about unleashing community engagement and park and community tennis could be a big part of that if it were properly supported
- Experience from America shows that Public courts can be maintained at low cost with high participation, free at the point of use
- This is where the Williams sisters learnt to play
- Tennis For Free with its much smaller budget has a proven track record in bringing life to downtrodden communities who would not otherwise have access to tennis
- Central government should review the efficacy of funding sport by public bodies to governing bodies and explore contracting out
- Sport England's grant to the LTA be halted beyond 2013 and a tender for NGOs and others should be established to run tennis programmes in parks and schools
- All local authorities should divulge income from park tennis courts and put up tenders for those willing to sponsor them
- As it is now in receipt of public funds, The LTA should embrace transparency and reveal the salaries of the leading executives
- LTA to establish regular, free to view metrics on the state of the Tennis sector
- LTA to build a relational database of all affiliated club balance sheets
- LTA to reduce professional coaching budget by 90% to £1.3m
- LTA to experiment with subsidising inter-club membership and for the Parks, a similar electronic matching system to [www.oneclicktennis.com](http://www.oneclicktennis.com) to boost the competitive depth of skills-compatible players
- LTA to leverage huge budget and gain large discounts for the maintenance of initially Park and later club tennis courts
- LTA to actively prioritise development of tennis communities in deprived areas
- National Tennis Centre to be opened up much more to amateur tennis players, tennis camps and corporate entertainment
- Annual 4 month summer schools to be set up in Spain and Florida for the top 100 best young players under 18
- LTA to lower the barriers to the tennis coaching market for community-based coaches and foreign association coaches

## Introduction

Every year when Wimbledon comes around and the failings of British Tennis are laid bare in contrast to the marked success of the tournament, it has become a tradition to ask the same questions;

Why can't Britain produce Tennis Champions?  
 What can we learn from abroad?  
 Where does the Wimbledon money go?  
 What can we do to get more people playing?

And then, these never-quite satisfactorily answered questions are forgotten and regurgitated for public and media consumption the following year with no apparent progress.

In recent years however, the excuses have been getting thinner and the questions, markedly tougher.

Britain's Lawn Tennis Association made a rod for their own back when setting 5-year ambitious improvement targets for themselves in 2006, which they then failed to achieve by a wide margin. The targets were even made easier in 2008, but still they were not met. These were;

Target Description	2008 Reset Easier Targets	April 2006 Original Targets	Results: 27/09/10
The average ranking of the leading five males	160	101	204
The mean ranking of the leading five women	113	197	151
The number of singles players of both genders in the top 100	3	3	2
The number of players of both genders in the top 500	30	30	25
The combined total of doubles players in the top 100	5	0	4

And 2010 marked a new low point for British tennis. How could a British team lose to Lithuania – population 3.2 million and total annual tennis spend £100,000 compared to the Lawn Tennis Association's £60 million?

Why was Andy Murray the only British player - men and women - left after day two of the championships, the worst British showing in the 133 year history of the Championships?

Far more seriously, it has also been noticed that the amateur side of the sport, first patented and codified in Victorian England, which quickly spread around the world, is in today's Britain, stagnant to declining. How is it that there are two or three times fewer regular players than in the 1930s, despite the munificence disbursed by the LTA from Wimbledon in the Open Era and more recently from taxpayers and lottery players via Sport England?

The purpose of this paper is to break out of this circular discussion, dig deeper and inject some fresh thinking based on detailed research. We seek to find out;

How did we get here?



Where are we now?

Where are we going?

With new priorities, what could happen?

This paper argues for a radical rethink of the status quo and ends with a series of policy recommendations to reverse the decline.

## PART 1: The Tennis State We're In

### Background: The Modern British Origins of Tennis

Tennis has existed in some form for thousands of years with balls being batted across nets, against walls with hands, gloves and rackets. The key step forward was the codification and standardisation of the game in the 1870s, which is virtually unchanged to this day. This was largely due to a Welshman, Major Walter Clopton Wingfield, who in 1874, patented a game called Sphairistike – the name of an ancient Greek ball game (see reprint of the original tennis patent in Annex 1). Fortunately he also registered it as Lawn Tennis which today is known as just tennis.

The game quickly caught on amongst the Victorian Upper Classes and the first championship was held at Wimbledon in 1877.

Unusually rapidly for the time, it quickly caught on abroad as well. This was thanks to an American socialite, Mary Ewing Outerbridge, who met Major Wingfield in 1874 in Bermuda and bought a tennis kit from him. She subsequently laid out America's first tennis court at the Staten Island Cricket Club in New Brighton Staten Island, New York. The first American National tournament in 1880 – the US Open of its day – was held in 1880 at the same location.

Wingfield's real skill was in marketing the game as a game to be played by the elite on lawns in private gardens. Advertising the game in magazines such as *The Field* and *Vanity Fair*, and highlighting that its players included;

*“11 princes and princesses, 7 dukes, 17 marquises and marchionesses, 54 earls, 6 countesses, 105 viscounts, 41 barons, 44 ladies, 44 honourables, 5 right honourables and 55 baronets and knights”<sup>1</sup>.*

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, there have been relatively few changes apart from the introduction of the tie break, some rules, professionalisation, clothing and equipment, most notably the non-use of wooden rackets from the 1970s.

### Historical Growth of British Tennis

Tennis grew quickly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century as an extension of the garden party for the Victorian Aristocracy. It then became an aspirational sport for the Upper Middle Classes. Of critical distinction of the sport from Football or Rugby or Cricket was that right from the start, women were considered as equal participants and it was to some extent emancipatory. The combination of aspiration and near female equality led to an explosion of tennis clubs. At first, they were very exclusive. It was however in the interwar years when tennis clubs took on a massive growth spurt, the number of clubs doubling between 1925 and 1938 from 1,620 to 3,220. This at a time when the population of the UK was 47 million. Today there are just over 2,000 and the population stands at 62 million.

A much less acknowledged parallel development that took place was the much-understated growth in Park Tennis Courts supported by what we would now call the Third Sector – a number of key charities.

After the Great War, the pressures of urbanisation, the lack of open green spaces that went with them and residual concerns about the fitness and health of potential soldiers led to a movement for the creation of public spaces for sport and recreation.

In 1925, a charity, the National Playing Fields Association was set up by Brigadier-General Reginald Kentish with the express intention of addressing these imbalances. It grew quickly

<sup>1</sup> See *SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN BRITISH TENNIS: A HISTORY OF PRIVILEGE AND PREJUDICE – a PhD thesis* by Robert James Lake, April 2008, Brunel University  
<http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/2826/1/Final%20PhD1.pdf>

and today holds (under the name of Fields in Trust) 2,000 fields and 13,000 acres - half of which were developed in the interwar years.

Critically for British Tennis, an early objective of the NFPA enshrined Tennis as a core activity. Known as the 4 acre standard for every 1,000 resident people, it stated;

*“Every man, woman and child in Great Britain should have the opportunity of participating in outdoor recreational activity within a reasonable distance of home during leisure hours. At least 4 acres should be set aside for team games, **tennis**, bowls and children’s playgrounds”.*

The NFPA were helped considerably by the King George's Fields Association (KGFA). This charity was set up on the death of King George V in 1936 by the Lord Mayor of London. They hit upon the idea of setting up playing fields rather than statues as a memorial to King George V. The stated aim of the KGFA was to;

*“To promote and to assist in the establishment throughout the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of playing fields for the use and enjoyment of the people every such playing field to be styled 'King George’s Field' and to be distinguished by heraldic panels or other appropriate tablet medallion or inscription commemorative of His Late Majesty and of a design approved by the Administrative Council”.*

By 1937, The KGFF had raised £556,000 from voluntary donations and lacking the resource to manage the land, effectively subcontracted these funds to the NFPA to procure and look after the playing fields. In 1966, the KGFF was wound up and all the funds and assets transferred to the NFPA<sup>2</sup>.

The expansion of tennis happened to no small extent in other areas of public life too. Very often, long-term military bases, would have some tennis courts constructed and regularly played on. And quite a few grammar schools – not just public ones - would have tennis lines laid out for courts too. Even some rural Mental Hospitals like Warlingham Park in Surrey had tennis courts, free for staff and patients alike.

All in all, having relatively easy access to tennis courts in the 1930s was normal. Relative to the population, there were probably up to three times as many regular players as there are today. So the golden age of British Tennis, when participation was at its peak, across nearly all reaches of society, was in the 1930s. Precise records on the number of park courts built in this period are hard to come by. But it seems the majority of those in existence today, were built then. Tennis courts were part of the local amenities and it was considered normal for them to be there. The number of clubs peaked too at well over 3,000.

### **The 1930s – a Golden Age for performance and participation**

It is also no accident that this period of peak participation coincided with a period of peak performance by the top British players.

Leaving aside fitness and resource, progress in tennis ultimately – and very broadly - depends on two factors;

- I) Skills compatibility – each opponent must be closely matched to the other for the game to be sufficiently challenging to allow incremental mutual progress so that no one player’s skill level declines on playing the other too frequently
- II) Competitive depth – there must be a large pool of skills-compatible players who not only match one another, but are available to play at the same time in the same location at high frequency

A large pool of skills-compatible players in the 1930s enabled a number of great players to rise to the top. Fred Perry, the last British player to win Wimbledon and the first to win all 4 Grand Slams, was clearly the best. There was also Bunny Austin (World no. 2), Pat Hughes

(Italian Open Champion 1931) and Harold Lee (part of 1933 winning Davis Cup Team). And stretching back a little earlier to the 1920s and into the 30s, Kathleen McKane Godfree (world no. 2 and twice Wimbledon Champion), Elsie Godsack Pitman (World no. 10 in 1929 and 1931), Mary Heeley (World no. 6 in 1932) and Joan Fry Lakeman (World no. 7 in 1926) were British ladies who also had great success in the game. All in all, having one or two players in the World's Top 10 was a fairly normal occurrence in the 20s and 30s for British players of both sexes.

It was also a time when Britain last won the Davis Cup – an international national men's team competition - in 1933, 1934, 1935 and 1936 and a runner up in 1931 and 1937. The ladies' equivalent, the Wightman Cup, the annual US-UK competition between the top lady players of each nation, was always closely contested and won twice by Britain in 1928 and 1930.

### Barriers to Entry for Tennis

Today, as then, tennis is still a more difficult and costly sport to take up than mainstream team games like football. Although far from insurmountable there are barriers to entry which raise the bar and exclude a number of people. These are;

- I) Equipment and clothing cost: £150 - £250.
- II) Club Annual Membership cost: £150 - £300
- III) 1 to 1 Coaching cost for 10 hours: £200
- IV) Assumed standard and connections to a tennis club

It is however very rare that a person decides to take up tennis and in year one, makes an outlay of around £500. What tends to happen is that in the first couple of years, they experiment on a free court, practice against a wall and friends, borrow equipment and have access to a few group coaching sessions. Thus the true outlay for this starting entry is more like £50-£100.

Perhaps then, for many people, unconnected to the world of tennis, the greatest challenge is to take the step to put oneself up for membership of a club. Quite often, that can put people off.

### Why tennis? The Social Capital Benefits

There is great intangible value in people being able to meet outside of their place of work, school or home and form networks and connections not otherwise available to them. Along with other amateur sports, tennis has played and continues to make a highly significant contribution to the social capital stock of the nation.

The World Bank defines social capital as;

*“ . . .the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society; it is the glue that holds them together”.*

In a 2001 Paper, the Office for National Statistics<sup>3</sup>, social capital was further sub-divided into;

- I) **Bonding social capital** - characterised by strong bonds e.g. among family members or among members of an ethnic group; good for "getting by"*
- ii) **Bridging social capital** - characterised by weaker, less dense but more cross-cutting ties e.g. with business associates, acquaintances, friends from different ethnic groups, friends of friends, etc; good for "getting ahead"*
- iii) **Linking social capital** - characterised by connections between those within a hierarchy where there are differing levels of power. It is different from bonding and bridging in that it is concerned with relations between people who are not on an equal footing. An example would*

<sup>3</sup> See The measurement of social capital in the United Kingdom by Rosalyn Harper of the Office of National Statistics, 2001 [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital/downloads/UK\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital/downloads/UK_Paper.pdf)

be a social services agency dealing with an individual e.g. job searching at the Benefits Agency.

Under these definitions, amateur tennis in clubs and parks contribute arguably the most useful component to nations intent on building open opportunity societies – bridging social capital.

So the real point about John Betjeman's much-parodied 1940 poem about Miss Joan Hunter Dunn "A Subaltern's love-song" was that not only did he and she actually play tennis (although not with each other in real life) and he believed it to be a subject worthy of composing poetry about. It's that the poem encapsulated the hold that tennis had on the social capital stock in that period which by any measure, has since then declined significantly.

### **Why Tennis? The Physical Benefits**

Aside from balance, agility, flexibility, strength etc. - as a stop-start high-intensity burst sport, tennis has two clear physical benefits superior to many other sports for a society worried about obesity and general health. Primarily it contributes to the development of fast twitch muscle fibre, which work at a much higher metabolic rate, burning more calories when at rest and in use.

Equally, the stop-start nature can help to engender greater Heart Rate Variability (HRV) from the anaerobic demands of sprinting for a ball at full stretch. Increased HRV has been shown to mitigate cardiac problems, asthma, and diabetes.

Finally, tennis is usually played outside, exposing players to sunlight and could go some way to reversing vitamin D deficiency and the re-emergence of rickets that has occurred in the UK of late.

All in all, tennis more closely mimics mankind's fight or flight evolutionary past than most other sports.

### **Why Tennis? The Psychological Benefits**

Tennis is a thinking sport that the player must immerse him/herself in to prevail. As a non-team sport, there is particular emphasis on mastering your own mind and zoning out of all external interruptions. The tactical element encourages the brain to build new nerve connections because to do something physically challenging while mentally taxing is an ideal launch pad for dentritation – the growth of new and connecting neurons.

There are also strong mental health benefits. According to the tennis-health.com website<sup>4</sup>;

*"Dr. Jim Gavin, author of "The Exercise Habit," wrote a peer-reviewed journal article for The Physician and Sportsmedicine in 2004, citing that tennis, when it comes to being focused, outperforms numerous other activities such as golf, running, weightlifting, inline skating and downhill skiing. In a similar vein, Dr. Joan Finn and her colleagues at Southern Connecticut State University discovered that tennis players scored higher in optimism, while scoring lower in anxiety and tension than other athletes and nonathletes. In a study examining adolescents, Daino found that tennis players scored higher in extroversion and a will to win, while exhibiting less neuroticism, anxiety, apprehension, obsession, and depression than nonsport participants".*

### **The UK Tennis Economy**

According to "Net Gains", a 2009 report by Tom Cannon, Professor of Strategic Development at the University of Liverpool and Chief Executive of Ideopolis International, British Tennis

turned over £1.2 billion in 2007 and was the fourth-ranked sport by market size. The paper was commissioned by Barclays, just prior to the London-based ATP World Tour Finals.

**Table 1: Sports in the UK ranked by Turnover in 2007**

Rank	Sport	Economic Contribution in £million
1	Soccer	5030
2	Horse Racing	4303
3	Golf	2332
<b>4</b>	<b>Tennis</b>	<b>1275</b>
5	Athletics	1000
6	Cricket	750
7	Professional Rugby	600

The same report also revealed a very interesting breakdown of the UK Tennis Sector in 2009.

**Table 2: Indicative Breakdown of Tennis Sector by Revenue in 2009**

Key Revenue Stream	Breakdown in £m
Equipment	60
Apparel	45
<b>Club Linked:</b>	
Memberships	65
Participation	35
Coaching	60
Social	25
<b>Non-Club:</b>	
Participation	10
Coaching	10
TV Rights	425
<b>Events:</b>	
Attendance	85
Other	80
Sponsorship	375

That TV Rights and Sponsorship make up a full 75% of the total says much about the commercial globalisation of tennis. Of particular note to this paper is that the non-club participation and coaching is so small at just £20m, suggesting ample room for expansion were only small amounts of these resources reallocated.

**Who plays tennis?**

According to the Net gains report, participation in tennis is strongly linked to the higher NRS Social Grades – now used by the Market Research Society and the Office for National Statistics; C1, B and A and not the lower ones, C2, D and E.

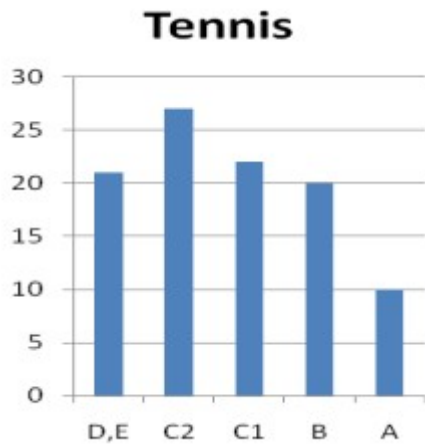
NRS Social Grade Definitions:

- A** is sectorised as upper middle class employed in higher managerial, administrative or professional positions.
- B** is categorised as middle class, working in intermediate managerial, administrative or professional roles.
- C1** is defined as lower middle class engaged in supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional.
- C2** is regarded as the skilled working class and typically constitutes skilled manual workers
- D** is the working class engage in semi and unskilled manual work
- E** is defined as those at the lowest levels of subsistence who fall under casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners and others who depend on the welfare state for their income.

A more careful analysis though using the same data compared to the Office for National Statistics 2001 census suggests that tennis players are much more evenly distributed along socio-economic grounds than Golf, Swimming, Football and Athletics. That is because ABC1 accounts for 51% of the population, almost exactly in line with Figure 2 below. The equivalent figures for the other sports are;

- Golf - 55%
- Swimming – 38%
- Football – 30%
- Athletics - 30%

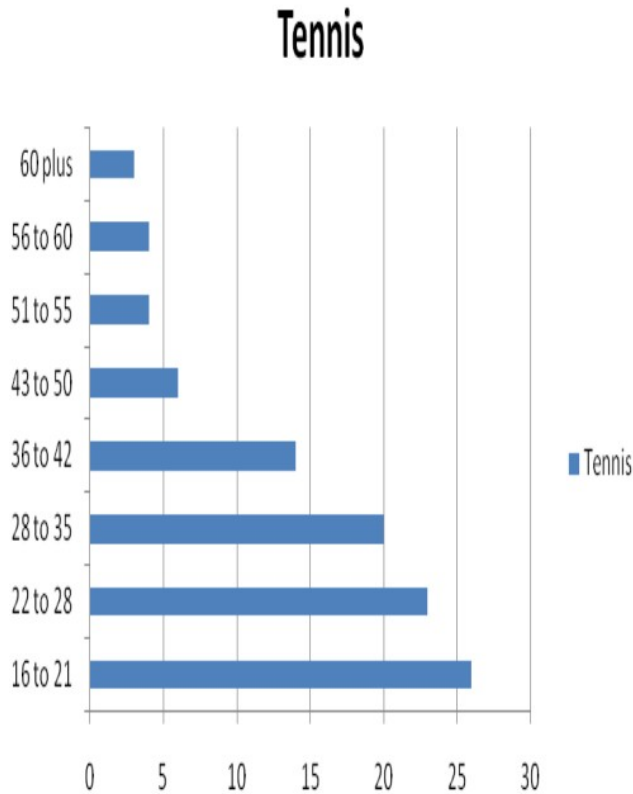
**Figure 1: Socio-economic breakdown of UK Tennis Players**  
Source: Ideopolis International 2008



The age profile of tennis players as well is revealing, showing a full 72% of players are aged 42 or less.

**Figure 2: Age Profile of Tennis Players**

Source: Ideopolis International 2008



**How many play tennis?**

According to Sport England, Tennis has the seventh highest adult participation rate with some 437,500 playing once a week or more.

**Table 3: The 12 most popular sports in England in 2009/10**

Sport	Participants
Swimming	3,156,300
Football	2,090,000
Athletics	1,875,500
Cycling	1,866,300
Golf	860,900
<b>Tennis</b>	<b>437,500</b>
Equestrian	337,800
Squash	290,100
Bowls	246,600
Rugby Union	194,200
Cricket	171,900

According to Sport England's Active People Survey for Tennis, the number of players dropped by 50,000 compared to the previous year 2007/08 when it was 487,900.



**Who doesn't play tennis?**

From the data thus far, we can conclude that those Britons who don't play tennis are very broadly, 61.5 million people (i.e. 62 million less 437,500), those over the age of 42 – across all socio-economic groups - and those from the lower income-earning reaches of society. Of course, dividing up the population into six sectors of income and eight demographic cuts is very crude and falls a long way short of telling the whole story. But the big picture is that tennis, compared to the other major sports has a more representative draw of society. In this respect, it beats golf, athletics, football and swimming hands down, especially when one considers the much higher participation of women. The real problem has been its failure to arrest its decline since the 1930s and to resume growth in keeping with that of the population and the global tennis economy.

## PART 2: What's gone wrong – finances

### Core finances of the LTA

The LTA's principal funding base is composed of the Wimbledon Championships, other Professional Tennis Events, Commercial Sponsorship and Sport England – a national lottery and HM Treasury funded government body or quango.

**Table 4: British Tennis (LTA, Tennis Foundation, LTA Group) Income in 2010**

Direct operating income	£000s
Net Championship's Surplus	31,002
Commercial	7,651
Events	8,669
Sport England Revenue Grant Funding	3,368
Other Income	4,633
Donations	3,000
Total:	58,323
Investment Income	
Interest & Dividends	717
Total combined income of LTA & TF	59,040
Less Group reporting adjustments	
LTA Interest & Dividends	-564
TF Interest & Dividends	-153
TF Income	-4,741
Total:	-5,458
Total LTA Group Turnover	53,582

Of particular note is that British Tennis actually receives a substantially bigger sum from Sport England than the £3.3m listed here. The actual figure is £8m but the distribution flow of these funds is difficult to easily trace through the accounts of the LTA and the Tennis Foundation<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, in 2009, the LTA reached an agreement with the All England Club that all future surpluses until 2053 would be given to the LTA – on the face of it, an immensely secure cash flow. In the same year, Sport England agreed to fund for four years a total of up to £26.8 million of total revenue and capital funding.

<sup>5</sup> See Sport England Annual Accounts 2009/10 [http://www.sportengland.org/about\\_us/annual\\_report.aspx](http://www.sportengland.org/about_us/annual_report.aspx) – the LTA was awarded £7,986,714

**Table 5: British Tennis (LTA, Tennis Foundation, LTA Group) Expenditure in 2010**

LTA Expenditure in British Tennis	£000s
Direct Operating Costs	
Developing and Supporting Talent	13,391
Growth and Development of the Sport	13,749
Competition and Events	16,235
Commercial	3,628
Business Support	10,335
Depreciation	2,780
Total combined operating expenditure of LTA & TF	60,118
LTA Group reporting adjustments	
LTA Facility Grants – Reserves	180
Financial Statements Reclassifications	-547
External TF Expenditure	-5,053
Total:	5,420
Total LTA Group Operating Expenditure	54,698

That a quarter of funds goes towards Developing and Supporting (Professional) Talent is highly questionable and this will be looked at later.

The LTA was formed in 1888, a decade after the first Wimbledon championships of 1877 with its initial aims to “*advance and safeguard the interests of lawn tennis*” in Britain and to do so by standardising the rules, court dimensions and equipment. In its early years, it succeeded and it would have been well advised to stick to this maxim. For comparison, the United States Tennis Association's mission statement is “*To promote and develop the Growth of Tennis*”.

Since 1888, there have been a number of different aims of the LTA.

A few years ago, it was “*. . . united in our commitment to growing the sport of tennis throughout the country at all levels*”

Today, the stated aim according to the Blueprint update of the LTA is;

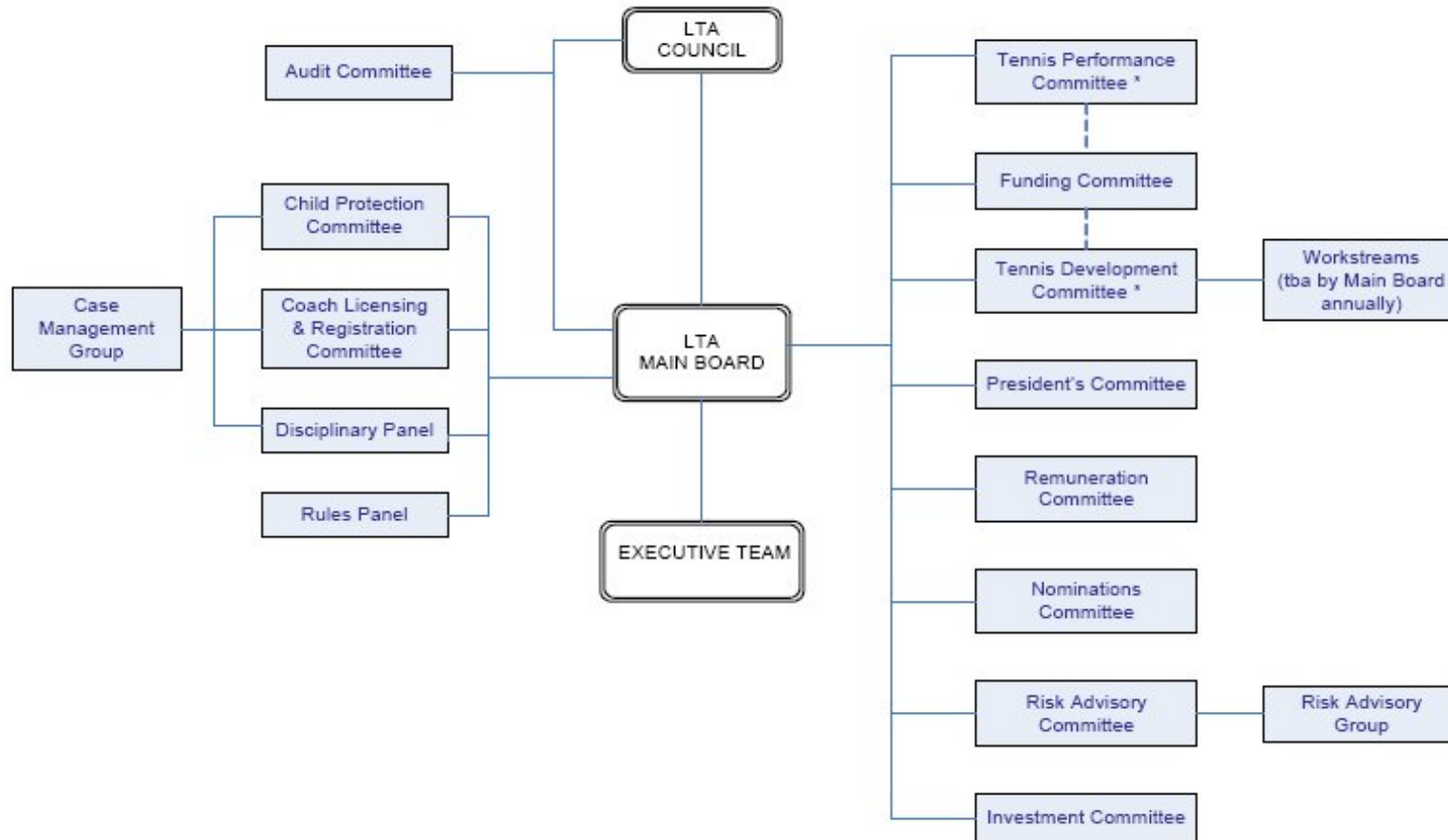
“*. . . to continue to grow and sustain the sport. We will do this by increasing participation and giving opportunities for high performance players to develop, as both of these make a significant contribution to growth*”<sup>6</sup>.

At some point in post-war Britain, the LTA's focus began to drift and it decided that its mission was to produce top flight professional players rather than to concentrate on growing the game, which in the post-war period, has suffered a huge decline.

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6 See <http://www.lta.org.uk/NewWebsite/LTA/Documents/About%20Us/LTA%20Publications/Blueprint/BLUEPRINT%20Progress%20Update.pdf>

Figure 3: Today's LTA management structure – a smorgasbord of committees



Last year the Lawn Tennis Association changed from being an association to an incorporated limited company. It is still though in possession of a large number of committees and panels, which belies the amateur heritage of the organisation.

These are overseen by Board of Governors – the Main Board – led by the President, Peter Bretherton and Roger Draper, the Chief Executive, allegedly paid around £500 k a year.

By international comparison, The LTA wield an enormous budget, far out of proportion to the size and success of the sport in the UK.

### **Wimbledon – the Resource Curse of British Tennis**

The resource curse – sometimes called the paradox of plenty – can be understood as how a free supply of capital, usually based on mineral wealth, undermines the accountability of a sovereign government to its people and the wider incentives to civic society to experiment with business and institutions, to fail, succeed and grow.

This happened most famously after Imperial Spain conquered most of Latin America in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. This afforded them, for a number of decades, a free supply of mostly silver and gold (at the expense of the native tribes such as the Incas) which was then directed towards a string of expensive wars across Europe, building monasteries and funding the crown, by as much as 27% in 1590 which was finally leveraged into ruinous debt, assisted by a pan-European banking elite.

The LTA and its free supply of capital from Wimbledon are not dissimilar. It too has become unaccountable for its actions, investment decisions and inherently shares the same flawed assumption that the money – from Wimbledon - will always be there. Imperial Spain failed to grow a sustainable tax base, a manufacturing industry and evolve checks and balances on their free-spending institutions. As Imperial Spain discovered to its cost, permanence is the illusion of every age and it was centuries before Spain recovered. To avoid that fate, the LTA should start to plan for when the Wimbledon revenues do not match their expectations and diversify resources through a wider investment in the game.

It is not impossible to imagine that government and lottery finances are weaker than expected leading up to 2013. This is when Sport England's four-year financial contribution to the LTA would be up for renewal. Just over 50% - £134.4 million -of Sport England's funds in Financial Year 2009/10 came in the form of Grant-In-Aid from the Treasury with the remaining £127 million from the National Lottery. With Roger Draper, former head of Sport England and current Chief Executive of the LTA no longer in charge by then and the personal connection thus broken, it's quite plausible that these funds may no longer be available.

Equally, the other main source of income, the Wimbledon Championships, is not immune to a fall in the price of broadcasting rights that has already started to hit football. Whether legally or not, homes and entertainment premises are already discovering that using a satellite dish and an imported card, or by finding the right broadcasting site on the Internet, they can access a sporting event for a fraction of the cost of the incumbent supplier. It is inevitable that this will drive the broadcasting revenues down for events such as Wimbledon and the revenues that they can direct back into the game.

### **Private Clubs – Stunted silos with little prospect of growth**

As mentioned earlier, most of today's private clubs were built in the 1930s when land and labour were cheap and relatively abundant at a time of few, if any, planning constraints. Of those 3,000 plus clubs, only 2,000 or so remain. Mostly suburban, they are nearly all today hemmed in by urban development and have a land value far in excess of the yield from their club revenues. So even if they were able to raise the c. £20,000 resource to build a new court they almost certainly couldn't afford the land to put it on.

Like some companies fixed to a certain-sized building, these natural constraints give them little incentive to grow. Courts are invariably used heavily in the summer months, and often juniors only allowed to play at certain times.

Their other constraint is the - one club only - membership system itself. A typical club despite having up to a few hundred tennis playing members, probably only has a handful of players who are skills-compatible and available to play each other at a time of their choosing. This lack of competitive depth is an outcome of having membership and competition that does not expand beyond the reach of the club.

### Park Tennis – Actively neglected

Given that so few clubs can afford to build new courts, it is extraordinary that throughout the modern post-war history of the Lawn Tennis Association, no interest was taken in the c. 10,000 tennis courts that were actually built and in some cases, merely in need of much cheaper renovation. Even 20 years ago, although there are no hard figures, anecdotal figures indicate that there were as many as 33,000 Public tennis courts. Britain's Park Tennis Courts were an unknown resource for the Lawn Tennis Association, which only came onto their radar in 2006. In October 2006, the LTA's Blueprint for British Tennis report identified 18,000 public tennis courts outside of the club system which it identified as "*underutilized and in a state of disrepair*"<sup>7</sup>. Their proposed solution was to assume leadership of all tennis charities that support community tennis under a new organisation called The Tennis Foundation.

As the document said;

*"Our aim is to encourage all tennis charities to come together under one streamlined Tennis Foundation, which will focus on developing and improving the community tennis experience. The Tennis Foundation will become more efficient and effective than the sum of the existing individual charities. It will be targeted to become a more effective fundraiser for community tennis".*

In principle, this seemed like a good idea. Cynics might suggest it was only at this point that the LTA took an interest in Park Tennis, as they believed for the first time, there was an opportunity to receive government funds via Sport England. In practice, after nearly five years, the experience would suggest otherwise.

### Public Funding – With Poor Results

It took some time to set up the foundation for this purpose. The TF was actually renamed from The British Tennis Foundation in September 2007 and it has been around for 25 years in other forms, initially in 1987 as the Lawn Tennis Foundation of Great Britain, a company. Today, the Tennis Foundation is at least partially indirectly funded by Sport England via the LTA. According the Charity Commission's records, in its latest annual accounts, it has a spending budget of £15.7m, has 10 employees and 39 volunteers<sup>8</sup>.

Rather than getting more new people from different backgrounds to try out tennis for the first time on Park Courts however, the TF is overwhelmingly focussed on everything else. This much is clear from the last published accounts which allocated in 2009 just £200,000 to Hotspots, Beacon & Self-service sites out of £14.7 million or 1.36%. The TF describes these types of sites as;

- **"Self-service"** tennis is a local community park-based tennis facility that people can access for free.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.lta.org.uk/NewWebsite/LTA/Documents/About%20Us/LTA%20Publications/Blueprint/Blueprint%20October%202006%20online.1.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=298175&SubsidiaryNumber=0>

- A **Beacon** site is a local authority park facility providing local communities with free access to tennis and offering high quality coaching and competitive opportunities.
- A **Hotspot** is an area of sustainable tennis delivery, where partners from local government, clubs, coaches, schools and other education providers all work together to deliver a range of tennis opportunities.

This 1.36% is even less effective when it becomes clear that the TF has evolved a system that primarily sets up cheaper rival tennis locations – Beacon sites - to existing tennis clubs.

The evidence for this comes from [www.eparktennis.com](http://www.eparktennis.com)<sup>9</sup>, a website of the TF to develop Park Tennis. When listing the numbers of courts and sites available as Self-Service, Park or Beacon, the following is revealed<sup>10</sup>;

**Table 6: Breakdown of Tennis Foundation Park Tennis initiative**

Source: [www.eparktennis.com](http://www.eparktennis.com)

Type	Sites	Courts	Percent of Total
Self-Service	18	65	11.00%
Park	50	184	28.00%
Beacon	55	409	62.00%

The core emphasis therefore of the TF is to set up Beacon sites. And the latest official figure for Beacon sites is actually 128 sites, suggesting an even greater preponderance given to pay tennis for what would have been free sites.

According to the official checklist, Beacon sites have the following criteria for tennis coaches to take over Park Tennis courts and effectively create clubs with new limitations on free play;

- ⤴ Free hire / court time (Tennis Development Manager (TDM) to define hours per day / week)
  - ⤴ Community open days providing free come and try sessions (at least 12 x per year)
  - ⤴ Free introductory session for any adult/child wishing to take part in the coaching programme
  - ⤴ 'Come and try' Cardio Tennis sessions promoted to the local community
  - ⤴ Free competitions, run throughout the year
  - ⤴ Free access to equipment
  - ⤴ Free [x] week membership and opportunity to use outdoor courts free of charge when joining coaching programme
  - ⤴ TENNIS FOR TARGETED GROUPS
  - ⤴ Free / discounted programmes for members of local authority 'Passport' schemes
  - ⤴ Free 'come and try' sessions for children / teenagers (on a Friday evening)
  - ⤴ Free coaching sessions in local schools and the development of effective school links
  - ⤴ Free 'come and try' sessions for parents delivered alongside mini tennis lessons
  - ⤴ Free sessions for pensioners
  - ⤴ Free 'get back into tennis' sessions
  - ⤴ AFFORDABLE ACCESS
  - ⤴ Cost of court hire per hour (peak / off-peak)
  - ⤴ Cost of coaching sessions (child / adult)
  - ⤴ Cost of membership (with details of court time included)
  - ⤴ Discounts for priority groups (LA 'Passport' members / pensioners etc)
  - ⤴ OTHER (NB Consideration should be given to the local socio-economic situation)
- TDM/TOM to provide full details

<sup>9</sup> This website [www.eparktennis.com](http://www.eparktennis.com) was closed down and the contents removed inexplicably during the embargoed period of the press release for this publication which now has directions to <http://www.lta.org.uk/allplaytennis/> - a new attempt launched just days before the start of Wimbledon

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.eparktennis.com/content/tennis-courts-in-uk.asp?search=&searchwhere=All>

Meanwhile, the TF's stand-alone programme for Park Tennis, called "Self Service" is clearly floundering. The stated goal of the programme is to work with local authorities to make park courts free of charge for general play. The programme's website [www.eparktennis.com](http://www.eparktennis.com) has not had a blog updated since November 2010 and those that are posted seem to have very little emphasis on free park tennis but instead cover events in private clubs and the tennis world as a whole. Meanwhile the online results page for all matches setup and played via the website - a good idea - whilst attracting 730 players to sign-up, shows a grand total of 4 matches played since 2009<sup>11</sup>.

It's no wonder then that a May 2011 report by the Centre for Social Justice, *MORE THAN A GAME – Harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people*, caused such consternation in Whitehall. It revealed that the LTA's Growth Target of an increase of 150,000 active players for 2009-13 in exchange for £26.8m from Sport England was not only not being met, the number of players were actually declining – by 50,000. This failure was echoed by the other sports in receipt of Sport England grants.

**Table 7: Sport England's largest grants, 2009-13**

Source: Centre for Social Justice Report – More than a Game, May 2011

Governing Body	"Grow" Target over 2009-13 (increase in participants)	Performance
England and Wales Cricket Board	72,459	-32,900
Rugby Football Union	141,312	-30,100
Rugby Football League	51,000	-29,700
<b>Lawn Tennis Association</b>	<b>150,000</b>	<b>-50,000</b>
Football Association	150,000	-54,700

Spending a fraction of 1.36% of £15m pounds a year to create limited free access with coaching to 664 courts, many of which were already free beforehand looks like a very poor return on LTA and taxpayer funds.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.eparkstennis.co.uk/player/match-results.asp> - involving 3 players, one suspiciously named epark!



## **PART 3: What's gone wrong – the élite emphasis**

### **The Futile Search for Black Swans – Tennis Champions**

As was explored earlier, at some point in the post-war history of British Tennis, the LTA, unlike any other national tennis association, decided its role was to produce champions, which by themselves would arrest the decline in British Tennis. This is flawed logic that has not been thought through. Even if the LTA did produce a champion, the game would be unable to scale up as the clubs can't grow and the public courts receive little attention. This mechanistic, top-down, imposed order approach to a problem almost always ends in failure and the search for British Tennis Champions no less so.

In his book, *The Black Swan*, Nassim Nicholas Taleb argued that just as everyone assumed all swans were white until New Zealand was discovered, many people assume continuity and predictable outcomes. Whereas it is actually the extreme unknown events outside of our control that shape our lives and make history.

Tennis champions are like Black Swans. They emerge completely unexpectedly, not as a product of a national system, but much more often thanks to driven, tennis-connected parents matched with exceptional talent and hard work with many other skills-compatible players in a competition rich location like Florida or Spain.

Tennis Champions are not made thanks to the predictable outcomes from the planning efforts of a powerful organisation, far from it. They are highly individual and actually tend to emerge in spite of all the systems in place and often come from non-conventional backgrounds. A look around the world would actually confirm this, not least these three former no. 1s.

Who would have predicted twenty years ago that arguably the greatest player ever would hold dual Swiss/South African nationality and herald from Switzerland? (Roger Federer)

What were the odds against a first generation Greek American from Maryland winning the US Open 5 times and Wimbledon 7 times? (Pete Sampras)

Who could have imagined that a man from behind the iron curtain from Ostrava, Czechoslovakia would emerge to be the most dominant player in the late 80s and early 90s? (Ivan Lendl)

Of course the embarrassing point for the LTA is that the last 3 British tennis players to be in the top 10, all have a distinctly un-LTA tennis education.

Greg Rusedski who reached no. 4 in the world and won 15 titles, was born in Canada and retained Canadian citizenship until adopting British nationality at the age of 22. So Rusedski's formative years were in Canada.

Tim Henman who also reached no. 4 and won 11 titles, came from a tennis playing family and his crucial years of development were outside of the LTA's coaching system, under the David Lloyd Slater Squad - a private initiative set up by the financier, Jim Slater.

Andy Murray, currently ranked 4 - and has reached 2 - has won 16 titles. At age 15, he moved to Barcelona in Spain to train for several years at the Sanchez-Casal Academy. Murray, born in Scotland was actually made in Spain.

### **The failure to produce decent players at great cost**

Nonetheless, despite the consistently random emergence of successful tennis players, the LTA has haemorrhaged funds trying to make them and continues to do so to the tune of £14 million a year. It also transpires that they paid Brad Gilbert, a well-regarded coach, £750,000 to coach Andy Murray for 40 weeks a year. After they fell out, the LTA was contractually obliged to pay him for another year so he then started coaching Britain's then no. 2 – Alex Bogdanovic and ranked 161. Since then, Murray hasn't had a coach and seems to be doing

well. But it was an extraordinary turn of events for a national tennis association to actually pick up the coaching fees - and perhaps ten times more what other professional coaches are usually paid<sup>12</sup>, \$100,000 and often less.

This high-spending on the elite also manifested itself in the construction of the National Tennis Centre, opened in 2007 by the Queen at a cost of £40 million, meant to be a focal point for the UK's top players. However, despite its excellent facilities, the centre suffers from a lack of players. As Andy Murray said in his autobiography, *Hitting Back*, "*I turn up at the National Training Centre in Roehampton, the multimillion pound headquarters of British tennis and no-one is there*".

In other words, there is not a sufficient depth of skills-compatible top players to train with. It would have been far cheaper and much more effective to buy or rent out a tennis school off the shelf in Florida or Spain where there is nearly infinite competition of skills-compatible players. The National Tennis Centre is once again symptomatic of the top-down elite approach to growing the game, which shows such poor returns.

### **A growing monopoly control of coaching qualifications**

The LTA has by default become not just the governing body of the sport but of its education. This has indirectly come about from the introduction by governmental organisations of the UKCC nationwide sports coaching qualification. All sports coaches today have to be UKCC qualified. The UKCC is overseen by the National Coaching Foundation, now known as Sports Coach UK, a registered charity turning over £13.6m a year and in receipt of large annual grants totalling £6.5m from public bodies like Sport England, UK Sport and others.

For tennis, this matters for several reasons;

Under UKCC, the LTA chose to appoint a single awarding body – 1<sup>st</sup>4Sport - to administer UKCC qualifications rather than to multiple bodies as per before such as City and Guilds and Edexcel. This means that UK tennis coaching companies are not able to arbitrage, negotiate or pick and choose a different awarding body potentially at lower cost and greater convenience to themselves. Thus a monopoly has been created with no downward price or competitive pressure on the incumbent awarding body.

Secondly, coaches qualified under far more successful foreign tennis systems – U.S., Spanish or otherwise – now have to re-qualify and teach the LTA method of playing tennis. It is not possible to teach tennis and deliver a UKCC programme unless the coach is an LTA qualified tutor. Again, this is anti-competitive practice that unfairly rewards the LTA. It would be far better and less onerous to have the market decide which of these qualifications are worth having.

Finally, a new Tennis National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), a formal education qualification, is in development and it seems that this will be through the vertical monopoly of the LTA and 1<sup>st</sup>4Sport on their terms.

Why should a governing body be allowed to take increasing control of the tennis education and awarding market reducing the choice and diversity which would have served everyone else's interests much better?

### **The Failure to Widen the Net and keep national metrics**

The greatest failure of the LTA has been not to reach out and get more people playing tennis from new backgrounds and different parts of the country. Rather than planting many seeds at low cost, the emphasis has consistently been to parachute in the occasional tree, at enormous cost.

<sup>12</sup> See *Wall Street Journal*, September 4th 2010 - *Tennis Coach: The Worst Job in Sports?*  
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703946504575469961990822120.html>

Much wider participation at amateur level is possible and a look across the Channel confirms this. The French Tennis Federation (FFT) can lay claim to 8,404 clubs, 1,105,445 registered players, 32,716 courts and 11,603 tournaments in 2010<sup>13</sup>. The precision is important as it demonstrates that the FFT have a clear handle on the state of their game. The LTA either does not have or does not publish these metrics in one place along with a host of other metrics, which would better convey the actual state of tennis in the UK.

The LTA has mismanaged its huge budget, failed to grow the game and at times, seems intent on managing decline hidden by the annual splendour of the Wimbledon Championships.

But it doesn't have to be this way. There is huge potential for recovery and growth and that is the theme of the next chapter.

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.fft.fr/cms/ColdData/docs/152/15246.pdf> Statistiques Generales établies a l'issue de l'Année Sportive 2010

## PART 4: A positive, alternative and high-growth vision for British Tennis

This paper has thus far focussed on what's wrong and why and how the status quo trajectory cannot succeed. But it would be quite wrong to assume that this an unrecoverable situation. Far from it, there is enormous potential for a powerful bounceback with social, economic and professional benefits all round that could reach far beyond the game itself.

### The Big Society and why it applies to British Tennis

The "Big Society" came out of Conservative Party Policy circles in 2010 and was enshrined in the Conservative - Liberal Democrat Coalition Agreement thus;

*"to create a climate that empowers local people and communities, building a big society that will 'take power away from politicians and give it to people"*

The critical point is that the LTA - to its own detriment - has for too long ignored the potential vast resource of park and community tennis that falls outside of its associated clubs, coaching and playing elites. The Big Society rule according to Prime Minister David Cameron<sup>14</sup> is that for government;

*"If it unleashes community engagement - we should do it"*

and for community empowerment;

*"We need to create communities with oomph – neighbourhoods who are in charge of their own destiny, who feel if they club together and get involved they can shape the world around them".*

### Experience from America

It should be noted that encouraging communities to get involved in Park Tennis is not radical but very common around the world.

In the United States, Park - there called Public - tennis courts are maintained to a high standard, are free at the point of use and regularly used by everyone including aspiring players. To Americans it is unthinkable that Public courts are not free, as they pay for them and their upkeep through local property taxes. Perhaps the most moving example of the popular utility of these courts is Richard Williams, father of the Williams sisters, who started coaching his daughters on the Compton Public Tennis Courts - an area of Los Angeles known for the riots in 1992. Between them, they have since won 20 Grand Slam singles titles.

Indeed, participation is so great in parts of America that an online matching opponent system, [www.oneclicktennis.com](http://www.oneclicktennis.com) has emerged in the San Francisco area. With a database of 947 courts in the Bay area and over 5,000 members well over 100 tightly contested matches (using algorithms) are arranged per week for a nominal fee. One Click Tennis is effectively a virtual club membership that solves the problem of skills compatibility and competitive depth that occurs within the UK's club system.

### The Tennis for Free Experience

Several NGOs have for years noticed the LTA's lack of interest in community and park tennis and they have worked hard to fill the gap. The most successful of these is Tennis For Free (TFF). TFF provides free equipment and a 2 year coaching programme delivered in a fun and lively environment by qualified coaches to children, young people and adults of all ages, standards and ability for 50 weeks of the year.

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572> Big Society Speech 19 July 2010 by David Cameron

At the end of the 2 years, a 'Friends Community Group' is created continuing to provide a free coaching programme with the same inclusive and welcoming ethos, built up through the Tennis For Free programme, to all the attendees. When a 'Friends Community Group' is established, Tennis For Free continues to support the scheme with technical advice and mentoring.

With its £100,000 annual budget, TFF have opened up tennis to many new players, persuaded a number of councils to stop charging for courts and created real communities out of many Park courts for a small fraction of the outlay made by the Tennis Foundation. There is great potential for them and many others to expand if the LTA were to start competitively and openly outsourcing coaching in schools and parks around the country.

### **British Tennis: what needs to be done - a new way ahead**

In 2011, by dint of their resources expended and the assets they possess, the big stakeholders in British tennis are central and local government and the LTA. There are many positive steps that can be taken by these three big stakeholders that will have huge long-run expansionary impacts on the future of British tennis.

#### **Central Government – review, tender, increase accountability**

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport should order an independent review into the efficacy of funding Sport by public bodies such as Sport England who distribute down to other organisations such as governing bodies without any real penalty for poor performance. No one appears to be in danger of losing their jobs at the LTA or Sport England for a precipitous decline in participation despite ample funds being made available.

When financial resources are so tight, much harder questions need to be asked about the returns on government-directed funds into sport. Rather than hand over through grant-in-aid large sums to the designated public bodies of sport, a review could explore the possibility of outsourcing through open and competitive contract, sports coaching and increasing participation programmes to NGOs and social enterprises in some of the most deprived areas of the UK. This could create an evolutionarily flexible environment – one with superfecundity – where there are more potential niche providers of these services that can actually succeed which would more than compensate for some failure that will inevitably happen.

Equally, as the returns to date have been so poor, it would be sensible for further funding by Sport England to the LTA to be halted beyond 2013. An open competition for these funds to be established amongst new and established NGOs and social enterprises for taking tennis forward in schools and parks. Competitions for these funds could be run every 3 years or more often if further funds become available.

#### **Local Government – the Big Society solution**

For too long, many local councils have looked upon their park tennis courts as the footnote at the bottom of the council's balance sheets they'd rather wasn't there or as an asset waiting to be sold off to a property developer. A positive measure they could take would be to reveal their current annual upkeep costs and how much is raised from charging to show how much they are used. Before choosing to sell off or close down existing park tennis courts, local authorities should then automatically invite the LTA, local clubs, NGOs and social enterprises to bid in an open tender to sponsor their upkeep. Very often, park courts are in a state of low-cost disrepair and low use and a small injection of cash and attention is all that's needed to create vibrant community tennis centres.

#### **LTA – create transparency, define industry metrics, prioritise growing the game at the base**

It is slightly incredible that a sport blessed with such annual resources as Wimbledon has persuaded the government to part over a 4 year period from 2009 with £26.8 million at least

half of which is from taxpayers. All this being so, the culture of LTA secrecy and “we know best” must give way to a new transparency. In keeping with modern government, this should start at the top with the LTA revealing all the salaries of the senior management.

Furthermore, it's extraordinary that the LTA as a de facto trade body for the UK's £1.2 billion tennis sector has very little idea of how big, what shape and over what time period its industry actually is. The LTA must henceforth establish clear tennis industry metrics, to be published every month; number of balls sold, rackets, apparel, coaching procured, British Tennis members, tournaments and matches played, courts built, courts demolished etc. These should be the new metrics of success and failure to which the LTA are held accountable.

The greatest assets of course to British Tennis are its courts. Unlike in France, there does not exist an unimpeachable national figure for the number of courts in existence. The LTA should establish and publish in summary form on one page - updated every month - in one place, exactly how many courts are in existence, where they are, what surface they are and to whom they belong.

British Tennis is still very much a club-driven sport but very little is known how they all compare to one another on a national scale. It would be a huge insight into the state of the game if the LTA were to build a free to view relational database of the balance sheets all the UK's tennis clubs to be updated once a year. Fields would include number of members, courts, cost of membership, tournaments held, junior members, matches played, cash, debt etc. This would be also be a massive leap forward in the transparency of funding one club over another, increasing competitive pressure amongst them and could form the basis for experimenting with subsidising cross-club membership to increase competitive depth of skills-compatible players. This could go a long way to overcoming the barriers most clubs face as stunted silos with poor growth prospects.

For most of the post-war period the LTA has had a long failure with trying to create champions. It's now time to admit this has been an expensive failure and the professional coaching budget should be reduced by 90% to £1.3m. The remaining funds could then be used to finance much cheaper and more effective 4 month summer camps for the 100 best juniors in Florida and Spain, where there are many tournaments and skills-compatible players with no more funds beyond the age of 18. The remaining £12 million should be reallocated to growing the base. To complement this strategy, the £40m National Tennis Centre should be opened up much more to amateur tennis players from Parks, Clubs and Schools and used to generate income from corporate entertainment and tennis camps. As discussed earlier, tennis champions are like black swans, they emerge randomly. But the big upside here is that if you really want champions, your best bet is to get lots more people playing, especially from new backgrounds and areas – as they used to in the 1930s.

That being so, there is a massive opportunity to start sweating assets they've hitherto ignored – Park Tennis Courts. Instead of spending 1.36% of its annual budget on around 40% of the nation's courts the LTA could unleash a revolution in the fortunes of British tennis and become the country's leading financier of social enterprise. There's so much that could be done here, at very low cost if the LTA chose to become an enabler. Of critical importance though is that the LTA continues to embrace transparency and opens up all its contracts to competitive tender with low barriers to entry. That does mean surrendering its monopoly of coaching qualifications. They may also have to consider closing down the Tennis Foundation which has crowded out many potential suppliers of niche coaching and development to the game. It's highly likely that post the Tennis Foundation, a great number of new NGOs, social enterprises and companies could emerge to bid for community, school and disabled tennis projects if they were given the chance.

The LTA could also leverage its huge budget and gain large discounts for the renovation of Park and Club Tennis courts and fund a similar electronic matching system to one-click tennis for Park Tennis - possibly paying players to play initially in order to build an adequate database of matches of skills-compatible players before it becomes self-sustaining.

The current trajectory of British Tennis, declining participation and performance, despite increasing resource, is totally unacceptable. It is now in the power of the stakeholders of British Tennis - Central and Local Government and the LTA - to unleash a major change of direction.

The opportunities are simply too enormous to ignore.

Annex 1: The original filed patent for Lawn Tennis from 1874



A.D. 1874, 23rd FEBRUARY. N<sup>o</sup> 685.

**A Portable Court for Playing Tennis.**

**LETTERS PATENT** to Walter Clopton Wingfield, of Belgrave Road, Pimlico, in the County of Middlesex, for the Invention of "**A NEW AND IMPROVED PORTABLE COURT FOR PLAYING THE ANCIENT GAME OF TENNIS.**"

Scaled the 24th July 1874, and dated the 23rd February 1874.

**PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION** left by the said Walter Clopton Wingfield at the Office of the Commissioners of Patents, with his Petition, on the 23rd February 1874.

I, **WALTER CLOPTON WINGFIELD**, of Belgrave Road, Pimlico, in the  
5 County of Middlesex, do hereby declare the nature of the said Invention  
for "**A NEW AND IMPROVED PORTABLE COURT FOR PLAYING THE ANCIENT GAME  
OF TENNIS,**" to be as follows:—

The object and intention of this Invention consists in constructing a  
portable court by means of which the ancient game of tennis is much  
10 simplified, can be played in the open air, and dispenses with the necessity  
of having special courts erected for that purpose.



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A.D. 1874.—N<sup>o</sup> 685.

Provisional  
Specification.

*Wingfield's Improved Portable Court for Playing Tennis.*

The manner by which I propose to accomplish the above object is as follows:—I insert two standards in the ground at about twenty-one feet from each other; between these two standards a large oblong net is stretched. To each of the said standards I attach a triangular shaped net in such a manner that the standard shall divide the said triangular 5 net into two straight angle triangles, each of which is kept respectively at right angles to each side of the oblong net aforesaid by means of loops and strings, and is fixed to pegs driven in the ground.

The large oblong net forms the dividing wall of the court, and the triangular net the wings or side walls thereof, whilst the floor is marked 10 out by paint, coloured cord, or tape into "in" and "out" courts, serving as crease, right and left courts, and boundaries. By this simple apparatus a portable court is obtained by means of which the old game of tennis, which has always been an indoor amusement, and which few can enjoy on account of the great expense of building a brick court, may 15 be made an outdoor one, and placed within the reach of all, as the above described portable court can be erected in a few minutes on a lawn, on ice, or in any suitable sized space either in or out of doors.

**SPECIFICATION** in pursuance of the conditions of the Letters Patent, filed by the said Walter Clopton Wingfield in the Great Seal Patent 20 Office on the 22nd August 1874.

**TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, I, WALTER CLOPTON WINGFIELD, of Belgrave Road, Pimlico, in the County of Middlesex, send greeting.**

**WHEREAS** Her most Excellent Majesty Queen Victoria, by Her 25 Letters Patent, bearing date the Twenty-third day of February, in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and seventy-four, in the thirty-seventh year of Her reign, did, for Herself, Her heirs and successors, give and grant unto me, the said Walter Clopton Wingfield, Her special licence that I, the said Walter Clopton Wingfield, my executors, administrators, and assigns, or such others as I, the said Walter Clopton Wingfield, my executors, administrators, and assigns, should at 30 any time agree with, and no others, from time to time and at all times thereafter during the term therein expressed, should and lawfully

Specification.

A.D. 1874.—N° 685.

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*Wingfield's Improved Portable Court for Playing Tennis.*

might make, use, exercise, and vend, within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Channel Islands, and Isle of Man, an Invention for "A NEW AND IMPROVED PORTABLE COURT FOR PLAYING THE ANCIENT GAME OF TENNIS," upon the condition (amongst others) that I, 5 the said Walter Clopton Wingfield, my executors or administrators, by an instrument in writing under my, or their, or one of their hands and seals, should particularly describe and ascertain the nature of the said Invention, and in what manner the same was to be performed, and cause the same to be filed in the Great Seal Patent Office 10 within six calendar months next and immediately after the date of the said Letters Patent.

NOW KNOW YE, that I, the said Walter Clopton Wingfield, do hereby declare the nature of my said Invention, and in what manner the same is to be performed, to be particularly described and ascertained in and 15 by the following statement, that is to say:—

The object and intention of this Invention consists in constructing a portable court by means of which the ancient game of tennis is much simplified, can be played in the open air, and dispenses with the necessity of having special courts erected for that purpose.

20 The manner by which I propose to accomplish the above object is as follows:—I insert two standards in the ground at about twenty-one feet from each other; between these two standards a large oblong net is stretched. To each of the said standards I attach a triangular shaped net in such a manner that the standard shall divide the said triangular 25 net into two straight angle triangles, each of which is kept respectively at right angles to each side of the oblong net aforesaid by means of loops and strings, and is fixed to pegs driven in the ground.

The large oblong net forms the dividing wall of the court, and the triangular net the wings or side walls thereof, whilst the floor is marked 30 out by paint, coloured cord, or tape into "in" and "out" courts, serving as crease, right and left courts, and boundaries. By this simple apparatus a portable court is obtained by means of which the old game of tennis, which has always been an indoor amusement, and which few can enjoy on account of the great expense of building a brick court, 35 may be made an outdoor one, and placed within the reach of all, as the above-described portable court can be erected in a few minutes

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A.D. 1874.—N° 685.

Specification.

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*Wingfield's Improved Portable Court for Playing Tennis.*

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on a lawn, on ice, or in any suitable sized space either in or out of doors.

And in order to explain my said Invention more fully I now proceed to describe the means by which it may be carried into practical effect, reference being had to the illustrative Sheet of Drawing accompanying these Presents, and to the figures and letters of reference marked thereon, respectively as follows :—

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING.

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of the new and improved portable court formed by stretching an oblong net A, B, C, D, between two standards E, F, inserted in the ground; to these standards are attached the two triangular nets G, H, K, G', H', K', stretched by means of the ropes L.

Figure 2 shows a perspective view of the mode of stretching the ropes L by means of pegs M so as to form a tennis court. The floor is marked out by paint coloured cord or tape into "in" and out courts, N being the crease in the "in" court. The space O forms the "out" court, and is divided by lines P, Q, R, S, as marked in the Drawing.

Having now described and set forth the nature and object of my said Invention for "A New and Improved Portable Court for Playing the Ancient Game of Tennis," I would remark in conclusion that I hereby declare my Invention to consist in, and I claim, a portable court for playing the ancient game of tennis, substantially as described and represented.

In witness whereof, I, the said Walter Clopton Wingfield, have hereunto set my hand and seal, this Nineteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and seventy-four.

WALTER C. WINGFIELD. (L.s.)

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