

1908

What follows in this display of ten decades in the development of our sport is no more than a flavour of the events and the personalities which combined to define the sport of Tennis in Ireland over the past 100 years. This story begins in 1908, at a point when there were up to 50 functioning clubs in Ireland. There is evidence of support for the idea of a National Association over the previous fifteen years but not all of the major clubs were in favour – whatever the arguments for and against, the representatives of fourteen clubs assembled at 8pm on Monday 25th April at the XL Café on Grafton Street and decided ***“that an Irish Lawn Tennis Association be formed”***.

Following the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, the Governing Body resolved ***“That the ILTA be established on independent lines similar to the Governing Associations in the Dominions”*** and Ireland competed in Davis Cup for the first time in 1923.

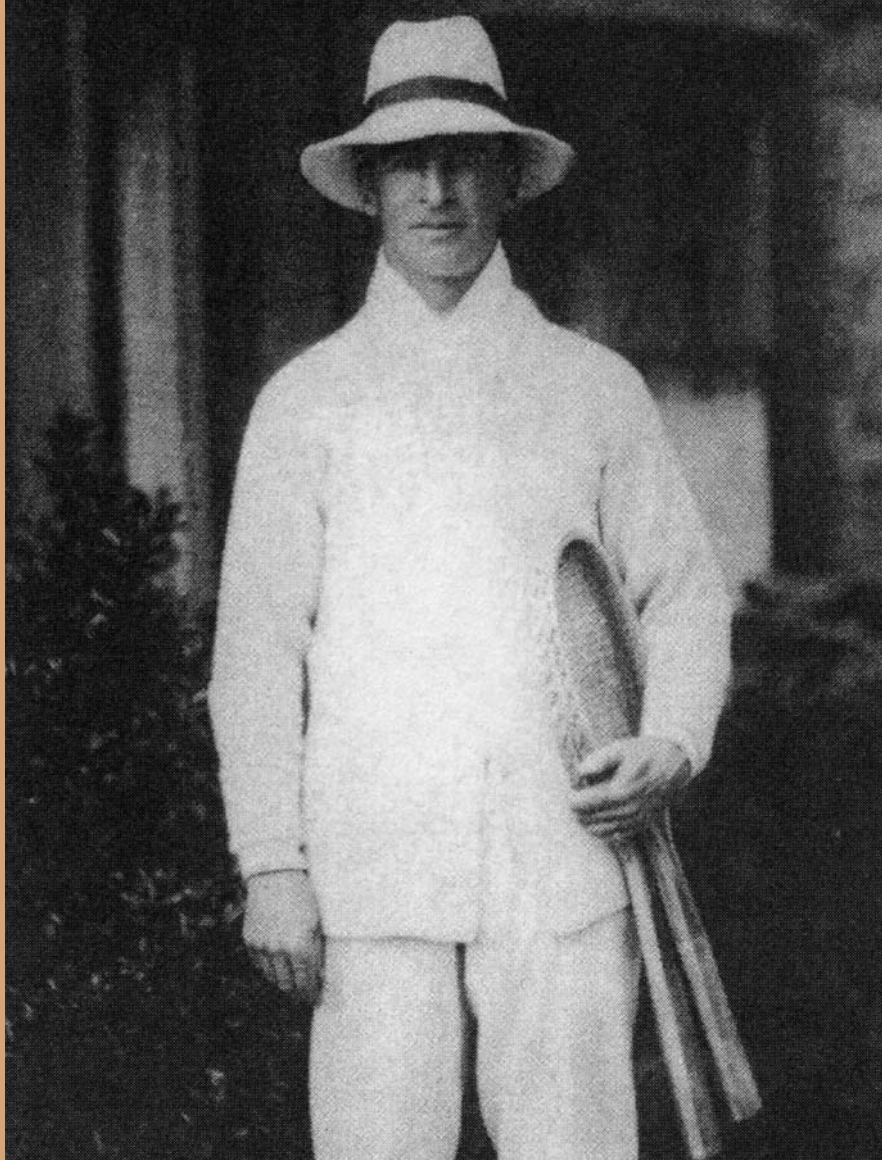
Article IV of the early rules of the Association stated as follows ***“The Association shall be managed by a Committee of eighteen Members, four from each Province, to be elected at the Annual General Meeting, and an Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer. No club shall have more than one representative on the Committee at one time, unless it be either the Honorary Secretary or Honorary Treasurer. Five shall form a quorum. The Honorary Secretary shall have power to call a Committee Meeting whenever it is considered necessary, and shall give at least seven days written notice of such meeting to each Member of the Committee. The Committee Meetings shall be held in Dublin.”***

Remarkably, this element of the governing structure stayed in place for almost 100 years - the 18 strong General Council of Tennis Ireland was finally abolished in August 2007.



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J. C. Parke (1881 - 1946)



J.C. Parke

EARLY 20TH CENTURY

James Cecil Parke, of Clones, Co Monaghan, easily proved to be one of the greatest international tennis players of his time while also excelling in rugby, golf, cricket, athletics and chess. Born in 1881 in pre-independence Ireland, Parke played for the British Isles in Davis Cup, which he secured unexpectedly in 1913 in Melbourne by beating Norman Brooke in the singles finals. Parke kept a detailed diary of the team's trip to Melbourne which shows that while he was extremely focussed on his game, he was also fully capable of enjoying his time away from home and had an excellent sense of humour.

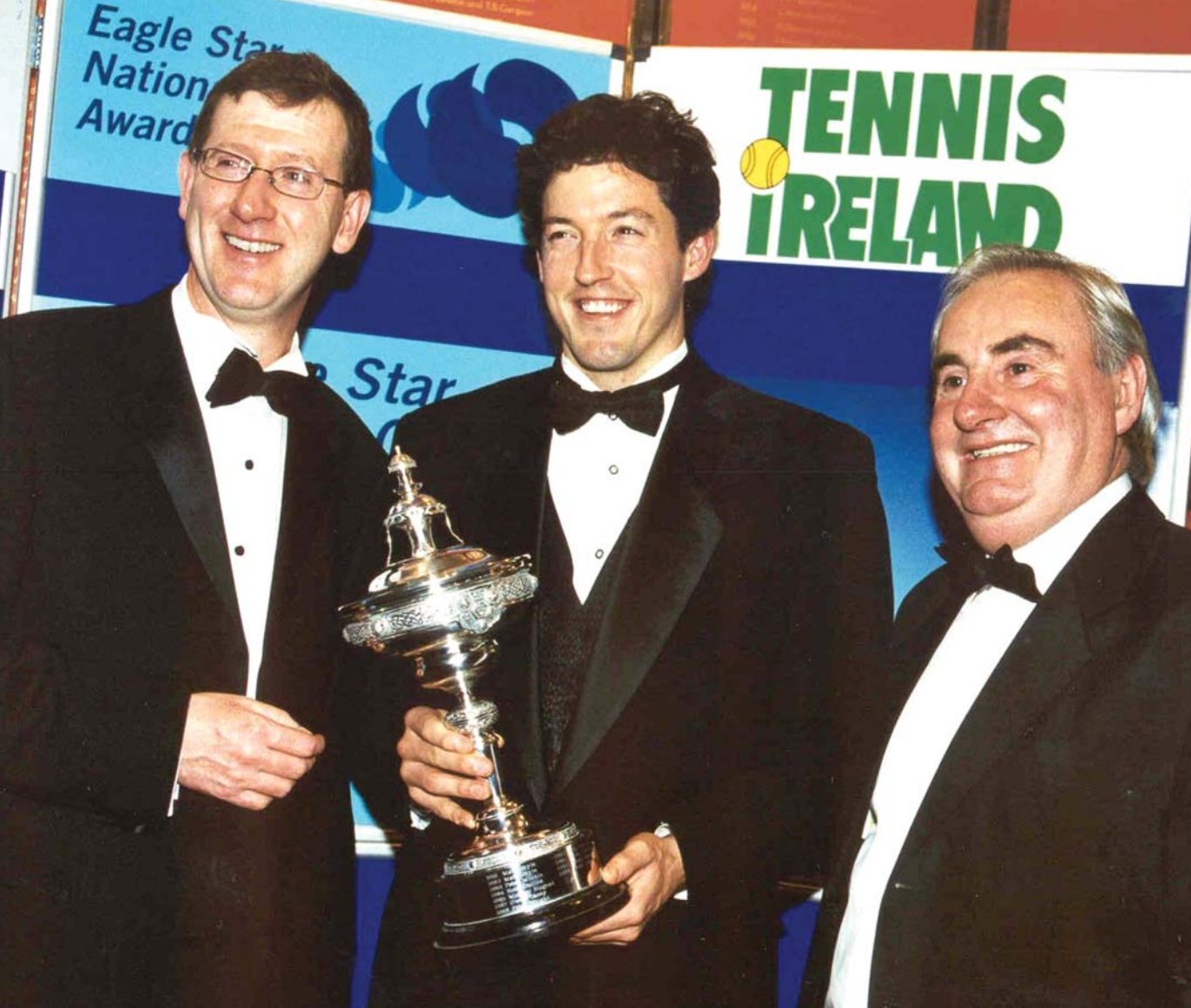
News reports and memoirs from Parke's time show that his style of tennis was exceptionally brilliant and his steely nerve struck fear in the heart of his every opponent.

A **New York Times** article dated June 1920 described the spectators at a match in which Parke beat then American singles champion William Johnston as being "...agog with excitement throughout what was regarded as one of the greatest matches ever played on the historic Wimbledon court."

Parke's remarkable achievements made him an inspiration to sportsmen and women the world over and a significant source of pride to the Irish sporting community – without doubt his Mens doubles silver medal at the 1908 London Olympics considerably enhanced his iconic status.

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2004 recipient of the Maunsell Award John Doran with Patrick Manley, Eagle Star and James Foley, Tennis Ireland President

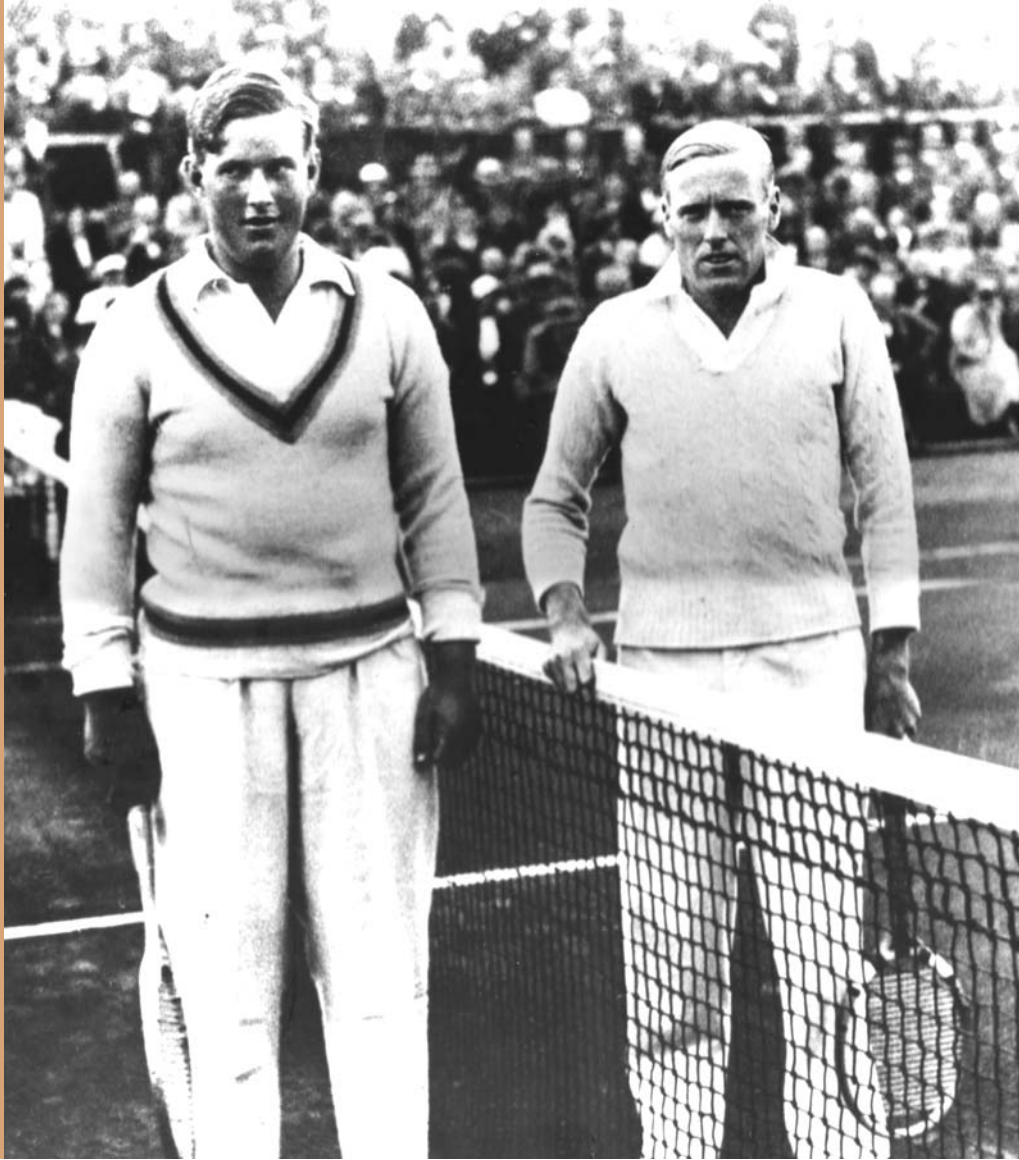


Harry Maunsell 1920s

Harry Maunsell was an accomplished player in his own right and played for his club in Glenageary throughout much of the early twentieth century, having joined in 1903. However, his greatest achievements in Irish tennis were in the area of expanding the scope of the game through his role as Honorary Secretary of the ILTA from 1920 to 1948. While promoting Irish tennis in the international sphere, Maunsell pursued a local agenda of increasing the appeal of tennis to a wider audience and encouraging the participation of children in the sport.

Records show that Maunsell was a progressive, modest and dedicated administrator. His legacy lives on in the prestigious Maunsell Trophies, awarded annually by Tennis Ireland to the senior male and female players deemed to have had the greatest on-court achievements in that year.





Kalle Schroeder (Sweden) & George McVeagh - Davis Cup 1936.

George McVeagh 1930s

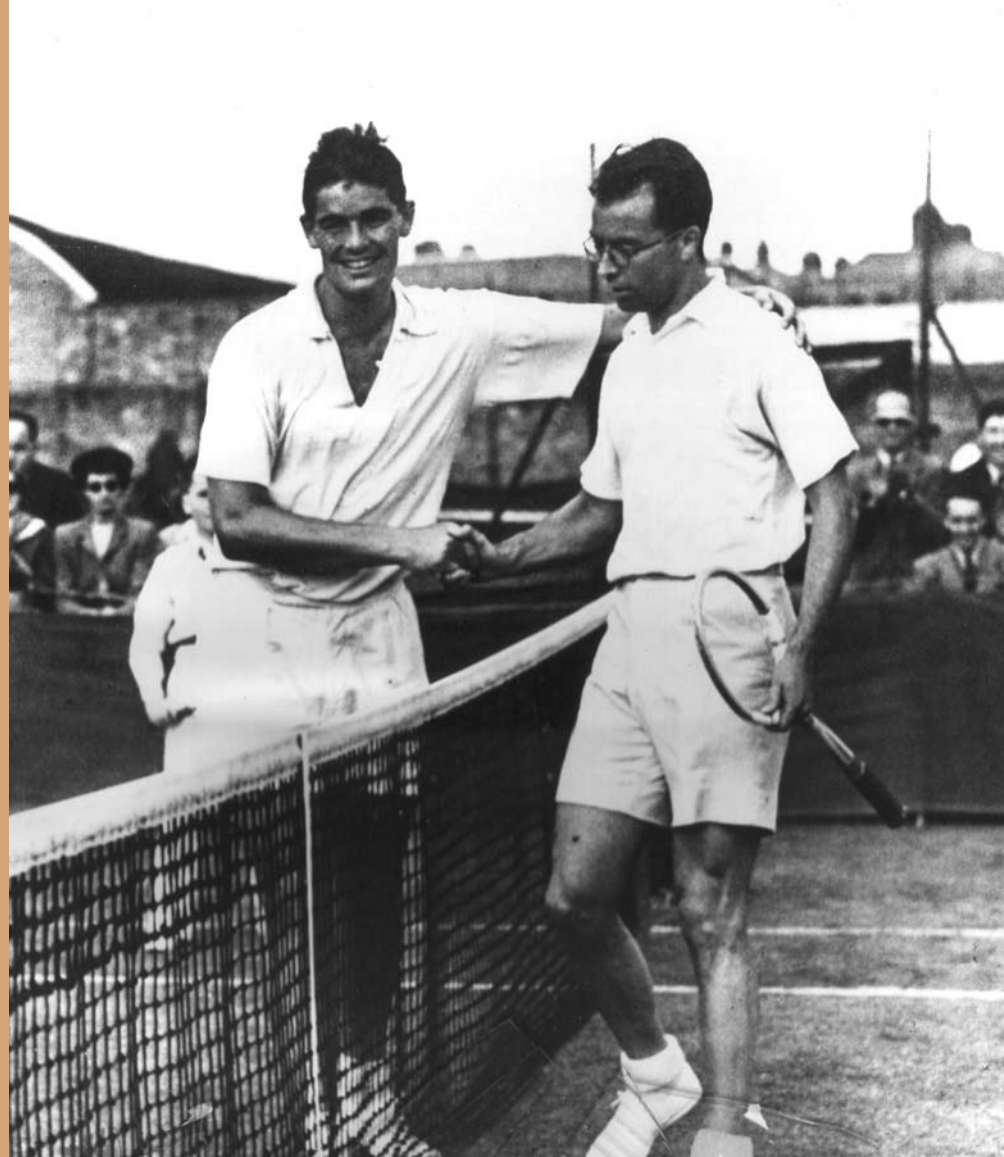
George McVeagh, one of the greatest Irish tennis players of the early twentieth century, possessed an almost super-human ability to master any sport to which he turned his hand. He held the unprecedented, and to this day unsurpassed, honour of representing Ireland internationally in tennis, squash, cricket and hockey. Despite an allegedly poor serve and having taken up tennis in his mid-twenties, McVeagh's unorthodox style of play was obviously supplemented by his excellent ball skills and limitless energy and stamina in the game. He went on to represent Ireland in Davis Cup over twelve ties and once beat American golden boy Bill Tilden in two out of three practice matches in London, stunning and infuriating the professional.

McVeagh's prowess on the court continued far beyond his 20s – in 1950, at the age of 43, he beat a young Gerry Fitzpatrick at the Fitzwilliam Championships to take the title for the second time, fifteen years after his first victory. In later years, McVeagh remained involved and active in tennis and held the Presidency of Fitzwilliam LTC in the late 1950s.



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B. W. Rooke (S. A.) & Cyril Kemp (Ireland) - Mens Irish Open 1950

Cyril Kemp 1940s

One of the most accomplished tennis players ever to grace the Irish sporting scene, Cyril Kemp reigned steadily as number one player in the country throughout the 1940s and never wandered too far from the top spot in the preceding or following five years. His greatest coup certainly entailed his sound victory over Tom Brown of the USA, then one of the top ranked players in the world, at the 1947 Irish Open Championships at Fitzwilliam. Brown had reached the final at Wimbledon the week prior to his Irish appearance. Kemp stunned his opponent and spectators alike by knocking the American out of the tournament and apparently shocked then President of Fitzwilliam, Willie Sandys, so that "his face was like the death of night", according to Kemp's contemporary Joe Hackett.

Cyril Kemp was well known for his remarkable sportsmanship and generosity, and earned great respect from his peers by maintaining his superior game over such a long period while working full time and fitting in practice and indeed competition after working hours and during holidays.



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J. D. Hackett 1946

J.D. Hackett 1950s

Beginning at the age of 6 on the family court with his older brother, Joe Hackett has had one of the most impressive tennis careers in Irish history and continued to play regularly and well into his late seventies. Hackett, who has described tennis as “a great passport to life”, showed the first real sign of great promise when he reached the final of the Irish Championships at the age of 16. His game advanced rapidly and he was repeatedly selected for the singles championships at Wimbledon throughout the 1950s and represented Ireland in Davis Cup many times, later serving as Davis Cup captain.

While showing enormous talent on the court, Hackett also demonstrated great skill and strength in an administrative context and was instrumental in facilitating the arrival of Open tennis in Ireland in the 1960s. He has been a life long member of Fitzwilliam, where he had the honour of holding the Centenary Presidency in 1977, and has been an honorary member of the All England LTC since 1966. Joe Hackett’s good nature coupled with his enduring commitment to tennis over many years has ensured that he remains one of Ireland’s best known and admired players.



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Year	Irish Ranking
1960	=6
1961	5
1962	3
1963	2
1964	1
1965	4
1966	1
1967	1
1968	1
1972	1
1973	2
1974	1
1975	1
1976	4



Michael Hickey



Alf Walsh 1960s

Alf Walsh, often fondly remembered as Mr. Irish Tennis, was possibly the greatest administrator and advocate of tennis in Ireland. Over the course of six decades of tireless dedication, Walsh essentially embodied the Irish Lawn Tennis Association, running the full operation from his kitchen on Leinster Road, Rathmines. He took a particularly keen interest in the support and development of small and Provincial clubs, and was renowned within the International Lawn Tennis Federation for being a respected spokesperson for the small tennis nations.

The advent of Open tennis was initially a cause for concern to Walsh, who greatly valued Ireland's position of relative authority in the international administration of the game. However, once it became clear that professional tennis was the future of the game, Walsh graciously accepted and embraced the new system so as to achieve the maximum benefits for Irish clubs and players.

Sociable, charming and boundlessly energetic, Alf Walsh was a wonderful ambassador for Irish tennis and one of life's true gentlemen.



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Mavis Hogg

Mavis Hogg 1970s

Mavis Hogg is best known for having been appointed the first female President of the ILTA, and indeed the first female President of any national tennis association, in 1983. However, her contribution to Irish tennis began much earlier and runs much deeper than forging a path for high-level female tennis administrators – she was first elected to the General Council of the ILTA in 1973.

A life-long member of Hawarden Tennis Club in East Belfast, Mavis proved over her career to be a highly progressive and practical administrator and is widely recognised for her services to tennis throughout Ireland. Particular praise is due for her part in initiating the mid 1980s ILTA conference in Mullingar where a comprehensive strategic plan for the modernisation and promotion of Irish tennis was devised. However, despite her ever-demanding schedule at the highest level of administration, Mavis remained devoted to juniors and local club tennis in Northern Ireland and spent most of her summers running tournaments in Ballycastle.

Mavis Hogg's good humour and direct approach over a long and fruitful career in tennis administration has earned deep admiration for her around the world. She was awarded an OBE for services to tennis in 1997.



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*Sean Sorensen as Davis Cup Non Playing Captain about to go on court.
Davis Cup April 2008 at Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club.
His son Louk is the player directly behind him.*



Matt Doyle and Sean Sorensen 1980s

In the early 1980s, crack duo Matt Doyle and Sean Sorensen led the Davis Cup team to unprecedented success and gave the game a badly needed injection of excitement. Recent decades had seen great activity at club level but it had been a long time since Irish tennis players had held the interest of the country.

One of the most memorable events in the sport's Irish history came in 1983 when Ireland played the USA in the RDS. The American team then included Arthur Ashe and John McEnroe, household names who assisted in drawing crowds on a scale never seen before. Davis Cup matches were normally held at Fitzwilliam but it was wisely decided in advance that the club did not have a fraction of the capacity required for such an event. For three nights in a row, the arena at the RDS held 6,000 excited spectators.

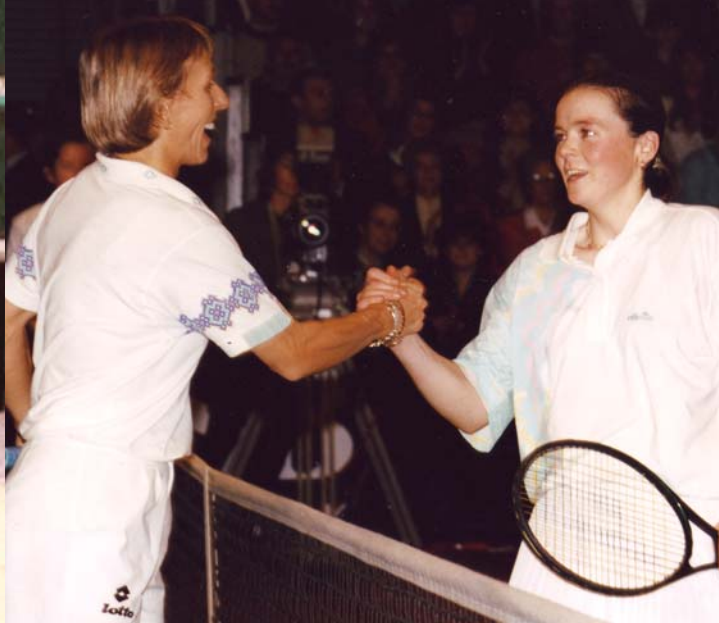
Doyle beat Teltscher in straight sets on day one, adding further delight to the occasion, and although Sorensen lost to McEnroe as expected, his ability to hold his own on the court against one of the world's greatest players demonstrated that the Irish were once more a tennis force to be reckoned with.

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Owen Casey



Karen Nugent & Martina Navratilova
RDS 1993

THE 1990s

The 1990s witnessed the emergence of a generation of players who were no longer content to dominate the domestic game and who sought rewards on the international professional tennis circuits.

Owen Casey, Eoin Collins and Scott Barron travelled the world in search of ATP points right through the decade and achieved some success. In 1992 Casey reached a career high ranking of 228 while Barron reached a best of 263 in 2001.

All three are Olympians. Barron competed in Atlanta, Collins in Seoul and Barcelona while Casey holds the exceptional distinction of competing in all three.

The Irish ladies were equally successful. At the end of the decade Yvonne Doyle had achieved a WTA ranking of 248 while Gina Niland and Karen Nugent both breached the 500 mark at various stages in their careers.

In terms of senior international tennis all these players excelled while representing Ireland in Davis Cup and Fed Cup. Casey played 26 ties over 14 years and can point to a 33-16 record. In Fed Cup, Karen Nugent broke records in winning 16 out of 23 doubles ties between 1993 and 2005.

For tennis fans one of the highlights of the era was the return of big time tennis to Dublin in the form of the TSB Classic Series. Karen Nugent, who was a quarter finalist at Junior Wimbledon in 1994, squared up to Navratilova – perhaps the greatest – at the RDS in 1993 and was by no means over-awed in losing 6-2, 6-3.



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Gary Cahill, Tennis Ireland Technical Director at the National Tennis Centre

2008

The development of the game in Ireland has undoubtedly been restricted by the combination of a lack of indoor facilities and the reliance on a single climate-friendly playing surface – the ubiquitous artificial grass. Equally, for many years Tennis Ireland had to rely on the hire of private court facilities to implement elite player development programmes in an environment which did little to encourage the development of tennis-specific sports science.

In 2003 work began on the first phase of development of the National Tennis Centre at Albert College Park, Glasnevin. Four indoor acrylic courts came into service in 2005 and 2008 has seen the completion of a further three outdoor acrylic courts and most importantly, three synthetic clay courts. This €2.5million project was brought to fruition with the very generous assistance of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, who administer the Sports Capital Fund.

The availability of these fine facilities has allowed Tennis Ireland to set up the National Tennis Academy which offers residential training programmes to Ireland's finest young players. None of this development would have been possible without the exceptional co-operation provided by our partners – Dublin City Council who made this site available and Dublin City University who provide residential facilities and access to elite fitness facilities and sports science on the adjacent campus.



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