

# **BELIZE TENNIS ASSOCIATION**

## **Annual Report 2019**

The Belize Tennis Association (BTA) started off the year 2019 with its annual general meeting and strong and weak tournament mixer on 16<sup>th</sup> of February. At the AGM we awarded certificates of Appreciation to two (2) dedicated Volunteers of the BTA, Juana Avila, and Jerry Revers. The Sibling duo, Samron & Jodi Pott took the 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the fun tournament and Maria Rodriguez and John Paul Jaramillo took second. We awarded fun prizes to youngest player, Sakir Pott, Eldest, Maureen Utsman, best dressed, Akeem Smalling and most passionate, Guillermo Rayo. In late February we also renewed our certificate of registration with the National Sport Council. We welcome input from anyone to see how we can capitalize on our relationship with Sports Council to further develop our sport, as we don't currently benefit from this relationship.

On February 23 we held a junior orange level and junior u14 level tennis tournament at the Pickwick Club. In the orange category Ramon Galvez from Horizon Academy took 1<sup>st</sup>, Khloe Musa from BES took 2<sup>nd</sup>, Zion Smith from HES took 3<sup>rd</sup> and Jenny Duquesnay from HES took 4<sup>th</sup>. In the U14 Daniel Musa came up on top with Zachary Musa 2<sup>nd</sup>, Santiago Palomo 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Laksh Kishnachand, 4<sup>th</sup>.

On March 24th, a junior orange level tennis tournament was held and a U14 singles. In the Orange level, Zion Smith took 1<sup>st</sup>, and Dahia Josef took 2<sup>nd</sup>. In the 14s, Daniel Musa took first once again and Santiago Palomo took 2<sup>nd</sup>. On the weekend of March 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> some junior players along with Cuban Coach Maria Esther Rodriguez Luis and several parents traveled to Chetumal for a Belize-Chetumal exchange. The juniors represented Belize extremely well and they gained experience and exposure in playing new players.

Around mid March, the BTA hired Oscar Avilez to build a much needed drainage system for the Pickwick Club tennis courts.. These Courts are leased to the BTA until the 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2029(term of 15 years). On the 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 we wrote a letter to the National Sports Council to try to stop a concert from taking place on the MCC tennis courts, but to no avail. It is our position and policy that tennis courts should not be used for any such activities which only destroy the courts and impede the development of the sport.

On April 13<sup>th</sup> we held a successful primary school competition and tennis Festival. Three schools participated (Buttonwood Bay Primary School, Hummingbird Primary School and St. Mary's Primary School- missing was Horizon Academy). The event was a success. We had 21 children partaking and we were able to see their development. These Schools have tennis in their schools. Coach Felix Peralta worked with St. Mary's School last year; and coach Maria had worked with Buttonwood Bay Primary. Horizon and Hummingbird do tennis through their own PE Teachers. In the Primary School Competition, Hummingbird took the top place, with St. Mary's 2<sup>nd</sup> and Buttonwood Bay Primary 3<sup>rd</sup>. On this occasion we also invited the parents and teachers of the children (who had never played the sport before) to partake in mini tennis competition and they could see why tennis is such a loved sport.

On April 27<sup>th</sup> we held for the very first time a National Testing Day. We used the ITN criteria, which is quite challenging. All levels came for testing. We had seven (7) persons testing on that day.

Month of May started off with a strong and weak tournament held in Belmopan at Hill Top. 9 doubles teams competed and everyone had a great time. Mike Sosa and Sakir Pott took the top position with Robert Lee and Corbin Avila taking the second place. Notable is that two of our juniors who train regularly, Corbin and Sakir held their own in this tournament and they impressed everyone with their improvement.

JTI report #1 for the year 2019 was submitted to the ITF (with whatever information we got. This is a lengthy document and needs cooperation from all coaches training juniors).

Between May 17<sup>th</sup>- May 21<sup>st</sup>, we had a visit from our ITF Development Officer, Mr. John Goede. He inspected the drainage system we had built at Pickwick Courts and the tennis Courts. He observed the surface being slippery and too fast and we discussed a possible re-surfacing using a company in Salvador. He connected me with Cecilia Ancalmo, the development officer for Central America and the seed was planted for what is soon to come to fruition professionally surfaced tennis courts (more on this later). The Development Officer after discussion with our executive council, suggested the following action points: Under Facilities the action points were to acquire windbreakers on the Belmopan tennis court fence, and to investigate play grounds of schools and other facilities where tennis can be introduced. Under Coaching the action points were education of coaches and teachers need to be continuous, coaches should adapt fitness aspects for juniors, coaches must organize more matches/tournaments. Under Programs, the JTI Program need to be strengthen, more tournaments for youth, involve more teachers and schools to participate in the Association, have more media exposure, appoint a public relation officer and have juniors attend more JTI tournaments. Under Events the action points were to have more tennis competitions in schools and overall, professionalize our tournaments and administration of them, and hire an events coordinator.

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, Pine Lumber Company Limited sponsored a male and female singles tournament in Belmopan. Mr. Goede was also able to observe this tournament, and before the tournament started, he worked a bit and observed some of the young players in Belmopan who train with coach America Waight and Mike Sosa. In the Tournament, 13 males participated and 6 females. In the male category Mike Sosa took first place and junior player Samron Pott took second place. In the Female, Alexandria Rios took first and Samira Musa Pott took second.

It was observed that the drainage system we built in March at the Pickwick Courts needed drain covers to avoid the balls getting wet; so, in May, 2019 we got the drain covers done.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> of June, we held the “Brodis and RF&G Insurance Men and Women’s Doubles” tournament. The format of this tournament has been revamped to a consolation format it was cause for lots of exciting matches. Mike and Stefan Sosa defended their title by becoming champs again (now two years in a row) and Richard Huang and Peter Quan took the second place. In the ladies, Maureen Utsman and Samira Musa Pott took the win over Sofia Sosa and Charlene Lee.

With daily training and the passion for the sport 2 of our juniors(Daniel Musa & Corbin Avila) were ready and eager to compete in the COTECC U12 tennis tournament which was being held in Honduras on June 24<sup>th</sup>-28th, but due to civil unrest it was postponed and when it was rescheduled and relocated, our players were unable to attend.

We ended the month of June by hosting a red stage tennis festival. Many kids came out but we had to cut things short around 11:00 AM when the rains came. The kids still all had a great time and got to do many drills and games.

On July 14th for the first time ever the Olympic Commonwealth Games Association hosted an Olympic day at the BTL Park, where all active sports bodies were invited to set up a booth to showcase their sport. We had a booth and brochures prepared and had an area on the streets where the public could try their hands at tennis. The turnout was good and we attracted a lot of interest. We got great exposure. This event led us to trying to finally make our logo official. The design itself is agreed, but right now we must choose final colors; and then we would have finalized our logo for the BTA.

We hosted our annual summer camp in July and August conducted by coach Maria. The MSTTA Tennis Summer camp also held summer sessions here in Belize for two weeks; and in Belmopan, America Waight held tennis summer classes. Many kids registered and attended these camps daily; but we must find ways to keep them playing throughout the year. In July we got a visit from engineer Daniel Santos, who works with the Salvadoran, company Cancha Deportivas, who we were talking to about resurfacing the Tennis Courts. He came to inspect and see the condition before they could quote us.

August 31<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup> we had the National Men's and female singles sponsored by Eric Eusey and Denise Courtenay respectively. Once again to encourage more playing we used a consolation format for which we have received positive feedback. There were exciting matches and wonderful camaraderie. Here are the results: for the female, Maureen Utsman took 1<sup>st</sup> place, Sofia Sosa took 2<sup>nd</sup>, Esme Rayo took 3<sup>rd</sup> and Charu Gurnani took 4<sup>th</sup> place. In the men's our National champ for 2019 is Ralph Tatum from Belmopan, 2<sup>nd</sup> is Peter Quan, the warrior, 3<sup>rd</sup> is Junior Player, Stefan Sosa and 4<sup>th</sup> is Jeffrie Omandam.

JTI report #2 for the year 2019 was submitted to the ITF on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

On September 28<sup>th</sup> we had a junior tournament for full court players. Daniel Musa took the victory once again and Corbin Avila took the second place. John Paul Jaramillo and Santiago Palomo were also semi finalists and we encourage them to continue to train hard.

In September, we wrote to the Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association for continued support in providing coaching assistance for 2020, to which they agreed. Our registration with the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) was also renewed in September and will expire on the 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2020.

Junior players, Daniel Musa, Corbin Avila, Santiago Palomo, Laksh Kishandchand and Blake Lee along with Coach Maria and some parents traveled to El Salvador to partake in the CONTECA tournament that was held from the 22<sup>nd</sup> -27<sup>th</sup> October. They partook in U12 and U14 categories. Our juniors represented us well and gained valuable exposure to professional competition. We did not place, but our Daniel Musa won a match against Nicaragua and it was the highlight for all of us. He made us so proud! We are convinced that our juniors should train with goals of attending and competing in more regional tournaments, with a view to improving our record each time. In mid October, we finally fixed the fence at the back of the tennis courts that was collapsing. We also received the quotation from Cancha Deportivas to re-surface the tennis courts here which is like US\$18,000 +. At this point I want to applaud you, our tennis players for contributing so generously to this cause. We have raised around \$15,000.00 so far just among us!

At the end of December we applied for financial assistance from the PAN AM Sports and Olympic Solidarity Funds of the Belize Olympic Committee (BOC), outlining expenses the BTA expects to have for the year 2020 based on plans, under nine (9) main headings: 1) regional tournaments, 2)national director/coach for athletes/development program, 3)International training camps, 4)Talent ID Events, 5)Locally held international courses, 6)Internationally held courses, 7)attending Regional & International meetings, 8)facility rental and 9)local competitions. We are still currently waiting for a response to see if we were granted any assistance.

Coach Maria who has been with the BTA from January, 2017 returned to Cuba in December. We had a farewell gathering for her to show our appreciation for her support, and gave her a beautiful collage of photos of her time here.

In January, 2020 JTI report #3 for the year 2019 had to be handed in.

Maria's post has since been filled. Our new coach is Osniel Bazar Cruz ITF Level II. He arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.

The BTA is enthusiastic to have him on board and eager to accomplish further development of tennis in Belize for 2020.

For this year the BTA gave out equipment to several coaches mostly in the form of balls, especially green and red dot balls.

We want to thank all of you who contributed to tennis over the year 2019. We have so much to do and ask for your help moving forward. Some of the things we need to do are:

- Create website
- Amend our Bylaws, especially to redefine membership

- Complete our strategic plan
- Appoint a coordinator of tournaments and events
- Appoint a public relations officer
- Develop tennis out district
- Have a ranking and point system for our players
- Compile a database of all players in all categories
- Continuously provide a yearly Play Tennis Course and Coaches Course
- Form a structured coach's committee that would meet frequently
- Encourage coaches to host their own junior and interschool competitions
- Find ways to identify more talented juniors for the sport through Talent ID Festivals
- Build mini tennis courts in schools to attract kids to the sport; a pilot project for this will be done at St. Mary's Primary School where we will convert its current tennis courts into 4 mini courts. The children will have regular access to play tennis during recess and after school.
- Commit! We need commitment from players, parents and coaches in terms of training and attendance if we are to develop this sport. This is especially important if we wish to continue to compete regionally.