

## **BTA 2020 Report**

Last year was very challenging. Nevertheless, the Belize Tennis Association kept working behind the scenes primarily in an administrative capacity to uplift the sport of tennis in Belize.

In late January of 2020 we welcomed our new coach from Cuba, Osniel Bazaar Cruz. He is an ITF Level 2 coach and we thank the Belize Olympic Association for once again supporting the sport of tennis through this initiative. Coach Osniel worked diligently with our young players in Belize City last year for the time that tennis was allowed.

In February we held a Fun strong and weak tennis doubles at the Pickwick tennis courts. A total of 28 players participated including some of our juniors. This event was a great success as it brought together families and friends of the tennis community. The winners of that event were Naim Musa and Samron Pott and the second place was taken by Gavin Willeter and David Hilmy (who came all the way from down south to partake). Immediately after the Fun Mixer the BTA held its Annual General Meeting for 2020 and elections of the new Executive council members were held. Our new Executive Council voted in are as follows:

President Emeritus/ Advisor to the Council: Edward N. Musa Sr.

President Elect: Samira Musa Pott

1st Vice President: Dr. Felix Atanasio Cobb

2nd Vice President: Dr. Mark Musa

Secretary: Juana Avila

Treasurer: Owen Sonny Meighan

Development Officer: Mike Sosa. (At this point I will read the Minutes of that AGM quickly and ask for someone to move its acceptance and someone to second it.)\*\*\*\*

In March we felt the significant impact of the Corona virus. All sports were discontinued. During this time the BTA, via its Face book page and WhatsApp platforms encouraged our tennis players to stay active and send in videos of them doing so. Furthermore, the lockdown allowed for work to be done on finalizing our Bylaws. We are happy to report that the Belize Tennis Association has in place its revised Bylaws and they are available to the public on our website, which we also pleased to announce was recently launched and is up and running. We also now have an instagram account. We have had Face book for several years now. We are not being left behind in this technological era.

Works to renovate the Pickwick Tennis courts (over which we hold a lease) was also scheduled for March. Unfortunately the pandemic delayed this. Many of our tennis players so graciously donated to this cause and we are grateful. We will soon see the fruits this year, as works are now in progress. The BTA also applied to ITF for help for the tennis courts repairs and we were awarded US\$15 thousand but they will disburse payments over time as we show progress.

Fortunately, in early June our government allowed the sport of tennis to be played. Your executive worked diligently to put in place guidelines for players and stakeholders for a safe return to tennis during a Pandemic.

In July, another Fun Mixer double was held at the Pickwick courts. Yet again this event brought juniors and adult players and all levels of players together for a great day of tennis. Twenty-two players formed 11 doubles teams culminating with Samron Musa & Zachary Musa as champions and Maheep Gurnani and Laksh Kisandchand as second place.

Our annual summer camp was held for two weeks in Belize City but it was a low turnout attributed to the Pandemic. In Belmopan the summer camp normally done by coach America Waight, did not proceed last year due the Pandemic. This is a venture that we look forward to each summer as it encourages new youths to join the sport.

In early August, Buca Services Co. Ltd sponsored a male and female singles tournament in Belmopan. A total of five females and eight males signed up to play matches of round robin at the Hilltop Tennis Courts. It was excellent to see three of our youths, Stefan Sosa, Samron Pott and, Adrian Marshalleck, and the young female, Nazli Williams, making it to the top places in this tournament. Young Stefan Sosa took the victory. We thank Buca Services for sponsoring this tournament. We certainly hope we can make it a yearly event. We also encourages other tennis enthusiasts to sponsor tennis tournaments in the future... the more the better and BTA remains willing to support and sanction.

Unfortunately, in late August once again tennis was suspended as COVID-19 cases started to rise in our country. Then in October Tennis being a non-contact sport, was again allowed and the junior training programs able to resume. We installed a sink on the Pickwick Courts to encourage regular hand washing by players. We would like to thank Mr Krishandchand for his generous donation of half a dozen bottles of hand soap for the courts.

In early November our Secretary attended a COTECC JTI virtual meeting with our area development officer John Goede and all Caribbean nations with a JTI program. Through this meeting we learnt that generally all the countries were having the same challenges as us in the sport because of the pandemic and it was a time to share experiences and ideas in dealing with the Pandemic. Also, in November BTA participated in a National Association Gender Equality Self-Assessment Tool which is an initiative by the ITF geared toward Gender Equality. Not surprisingly, Belize scored a 44/125 which shows that we have limited capacity to address Gender Equality in sports; but, as ITF pointed out, it can also be a reason to get motivated and be creative. Considering this, we are proud of the ladies programme that is being carried out in Belmopan and headed by America Waight. We also encourage more women and young girls to take interest in the sport of tennis. Working towards gender equality, we are hoping to be able to offer tennis classes to ladies in Belize City soon.

We were informed in November that coach Osniel had to return to Cuba due to a family emergency. The BTA immediately requested funding from the Olympic Committee to assist in paying two of our local coaches to fill in the 6 weeks of tennis training left for the year 2020 that the kids would be missing. Thankfully Olympic Committee obliged and we received funding for Mr Felix Peralta and Mr Mike Sosa to continue the tennis lessons.

Upon request of some male players from Belize City, in December a COVID-19 friendly male's singles competition sponsored by Samira Musa Pott was our final event. A total of 8 players entered and played round robin. The competitors went out to the tennis courts on their own while observing social

distancing, played their match and reported scores to our WhatsApp group chat. After a little over a week of matches, Samron Pott took the first place and Jeffrie Omandam took second. We thank all the gentlemen that participated.

In December 2020 we received approval for a grant from ITF to hold 2 coaches' workshops (one in Belize City and one in Belmopan). We have until June 2021 to have this before we lose the grant. We will organize these and hope to have you join the course and learn to teach tennis. We are in need of more locally trained coaches because we need to grow the sport for both competitive and recreational and health purposes.

The BTA is also happy to report that we have finalized our Membership Application form and it was disseminated to all of you. We have gotten a few applications and we look forward to receiving more as we move ahead. We urge all to apply and become an official member of the Belize Tennis Association. Your contribution to the BTA is a contribution to the overall development of the sport nationally. We also encourage Clubs that are organized to become affiliate member of the BTA and work with us as we shape and develop tennis in Belize.

Lastly, we extend our gratitude to all of YOU---our tennis family. We thank you for your support throughout the year 2020 and we hope for a better 2021. Thank You.