

Bachelor of Business (SPORT MANAGEMENT)

Sport In Society - SPORT HISTORY

Vermont South Club
VSC

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VSCTC

The Australian sporting institution of the Vermont South Community Tennis Club (VSCTC), later to be changed to the Vermont South Club, has undergone dramatic changes in its fifteen year history. The club has developed from a five court complex with a tin-shed clubhouse, to a nine-court complex with a two-level clubhouse; with the sports of darts, indoor bowls, table-tennis, lawn-bowls and tennis. The tin-shed has developed into a multi-level clubhouse containing two licensed bars, spa, sauna and much more. What were the major factors resulting in such a dramatic development of the tennis club? The following presentation will analyse the phenomenal development of a club, which relatively speaking, is barely out of adolescence. ✓

Background

The VSCTC was formed in the early months of 1978. A steering committee examined the feasibility of building a tennis club and facilities for the benefit of the residents of Vermont South. Many existing tennis clubs in the City of Nunawading were refusing to accept any new members. Therefore, residents had the problem of wanting to participate in tennis as a sport or recreation, but having nowhere to play. The steering committee, with the assistance of the Council, set about the task of creating and developing a tennis club, seeking members from the residents of Nunawading. They secured approval for a tennis court complex, situated at Charlesworth Park, Livingstone Road. The complex was initially to contain eight courts, clubhouse, car park and surrounding public facilities. ✓

The main aim of the VSCTC was to provide residents of Nunawading, and more specifically Vermont South, with a complex to satisfy their demand for a local tennis club. ✓ This was achieved, and received mild support from locals in its early years. The development of the once mediocre tennis club is a credit to its members and the dedicated work of club officials.

Club Development

The first stage of development was commenced in January of 1979, and completed in July of the same year. It involved the construction of five courts and associated facilities (tin-shed), at a cost of \$38,500. The lack of a clubhouse and adequate toilet facilities to accommodate the club's members posed a serious problem for the club's future. The future development of the club was originally to involve the building of a clubhouse, carpark, three more en-tou-cas courts and landscaping, totalling \$86,000. This figure did not include the provision for lighting on three courts, costing an additional \$13,000.

In the club's early development, the committee struggled to attract sufficient membership from the public, who weren't willing to commit themselves to a club boasting neither facilities or funds. However, the start of construction attracted membership in the area, and the completion of the courts meant the upper limit of 250 members was quickly reached. Prospective members were then put on a waiting list, and the construction of a new, much larger clubhouse was a priority of the VSCTC. In order for there to be a substantial increase in membership and funds, the club would need to build more tennis courts in addition to the new clubhouse. ✓

On top of the five courts the club initially constructed, there was later to be the addition of courts six and seven. The construction of a modern clubhouse, with kitchen and toilet facilities accompanied the two new courts, and the combination of these was a great advertisement for locals. This instigated a large boost in membership, and subsequently funds for the club. ✓

The VSCTC remained with its setup of seven courts and solitary clubhouse until 1988, when a request was made to gain land for the addition of two more tennis courts. The application for the land struck some early snags. A ^{council} counsellor noted that on a Sunday morning when he visited the club, there was barely any activity on the seven courts, suggesting that the club did not require the two additional courts. The Club's committee noted as follows;

"We would refer you to our Submission, Clause 4.1 (court utilisation). Cr Coyne (as stated) visited our Club on Sunday 12th June when only one court was in use. I would like to point out that it was the Queen's Birthday Holiday week-end, therefore there was no competition play and numerous families were away for the week-end. I do not believe that this was a fair assessment of our normal court usage." ✓

¹ VSCTC Minutes - 16th June 1988 - Kevin L. Donovan (Club President)

This was a notable oversight on behalf of the Council, but was only one of many opposing arguments put forward to stop the development of the two new courts. The Council's emphasis during the debate focussed on the need to cut into the recreational parkland, affecting casual recreational sport undertaken by local residents. However, Charlesworth Park contains installed playground equipment, situated approximately eighty metres away from the proposed position for the two new courts. Over the past ten years, very little activity other than the use of this equipment has occurred, with the most active users being golfers practising illegally and proving potentially dangerous to park users. ✓

The Club also argued that they served at the time 800 people in the area, amounting to 350 families. A great majority of the families surrounding the park were members of the club, and have supported the approach to obtain the extra land required for the construction of courts eight and nine.

The position of the junior members was of great concern to the Club. As there were too many junior members in relation to the number of courts available, two private courts needed to be used, and the Club at one stage had to hire three courts from the City of Nunawading (Silver Grove). These temporary solutions proved to be unsuccessful, having the effect of alienating one group of juniors from another. ✓ The Club was aware that if the grant for the two additional courts was not obtained, they would have no other option than to cut down the junior membership. If there was no social activity introduced as an alternative to tennis, how would the juniors occupy their leisure hours - vandalism, burglary etc.?

"The Vermont South Community Tennis Club Incorporated provides a very important Teenage Social link in the Vermont area South of Canterbury Road, both after school and of a week-end. We feel that if we divorce ourselves from this problem and don't provide adequate recreational facilities it can only cause the existing teenage problem to escalate." ✓

The overwhelming support from members and the like for the construction of the two new courts, along with the succession of logical arguments for the seemingly inevitable development, meant the grant for the additional two courts was approved. The VSCTC, with its nine courts, could accommodate all of its junior members and once again concentrate on attracting new members to the club.

With nine courts and the desire for greater membership numbers, the future of the VSCTC was delicately poised. The decision to apply for another loan to fund an extension to the clubhouse

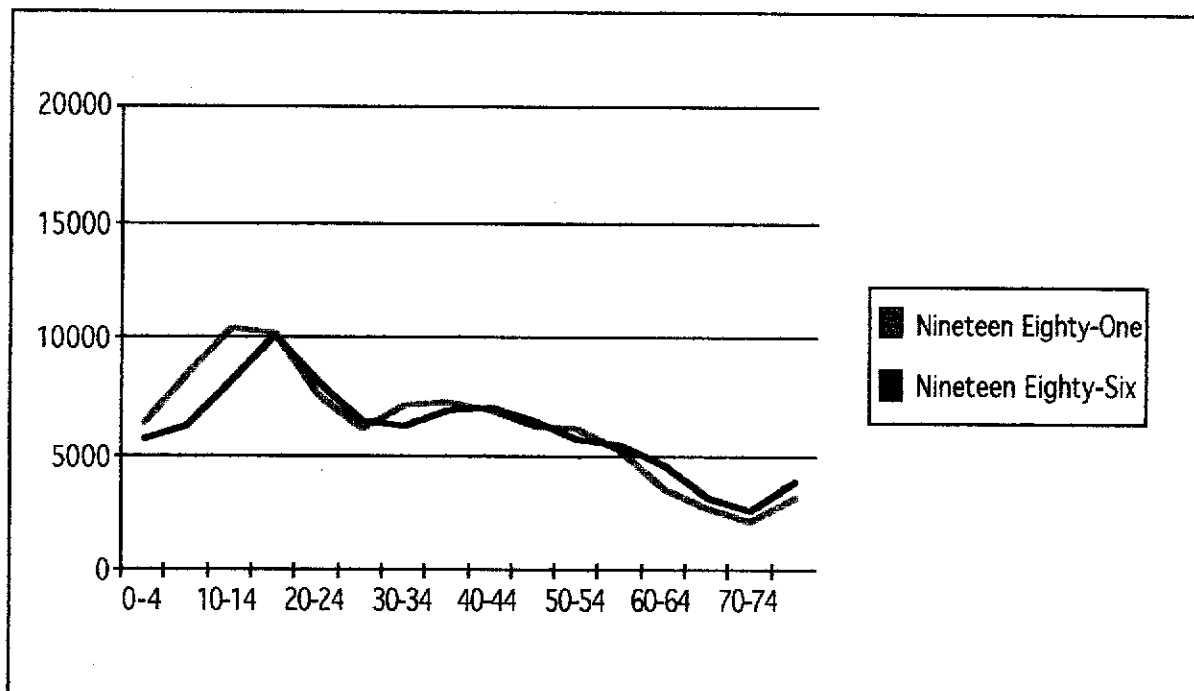
² VSCTC Minutes - 16th June 1988 - Kevin L. Donovan (Club President)

came very soon after the addition of courts eight and nine. On 17th August 1990, the President of the Club submitted a list of points in favour of granting a loan for the extension of the clubhouse.

- The proposed extensions will create increased leisure opportunities, particularly for the 18-25 year age group.
- Friday and Saturday nights could be directed toward providing recreational facilities for indoor bowls, night tennis, darts, table-tennis and other passive recreation activities in a licensed club atmosphere.
- The Club's exemplary record in servicing previous loans.
- The clubhouse would be of great benefit to the likely outcome of a bowling green provided for residents living South of Canterbury Road.
- The population in the Nunawading area is an aging one, and the addition of recreational facilities would be of great benefit to both junior and senior citizens.

The foreseeable introduction of a bowling green to accompany the new clubhouse would greatly enhance the opportunities for the aging population.

AGE of Nunawading Residents



Source : Estimated Resident Population Figures

The previous graph shows how the Nunawading population has aged over the five year period from 1981 - 1986. The greatest decreasing age group has been the 0-9 age group. The fastest growing age group is the 60 years and over.

The proportion of elderly residents living in the inner-east region, including Waverley, has increased and is expected to increase even further in the future. "Presently, one in 10 residents in the region is a senior citizen, but this should rise to one in seven by 1996."³ This increase in the elderly population was a major shaping factor in the development of the extended clubhouse, and the impending construction of the 8 x 8 bowling green.

That is meant by 8 x 8 " - is it that 8 parallel ends can be simultaneously conducted

When the bowling green was first mentioned as a further development to the club, there were three sites being examined. Location C was eventually chosen, and the map on the following page shows the position of the bowling green. There were both points for and against the placement of the green in the proposed position, but the southern side of the main carpark was deemed most suitable.

The points in favour of site C;

- Natural boundary formed by existing carpark.
- Close to new clubhouse.
- Night lighting would provide no intrusions to neighbouring residences.

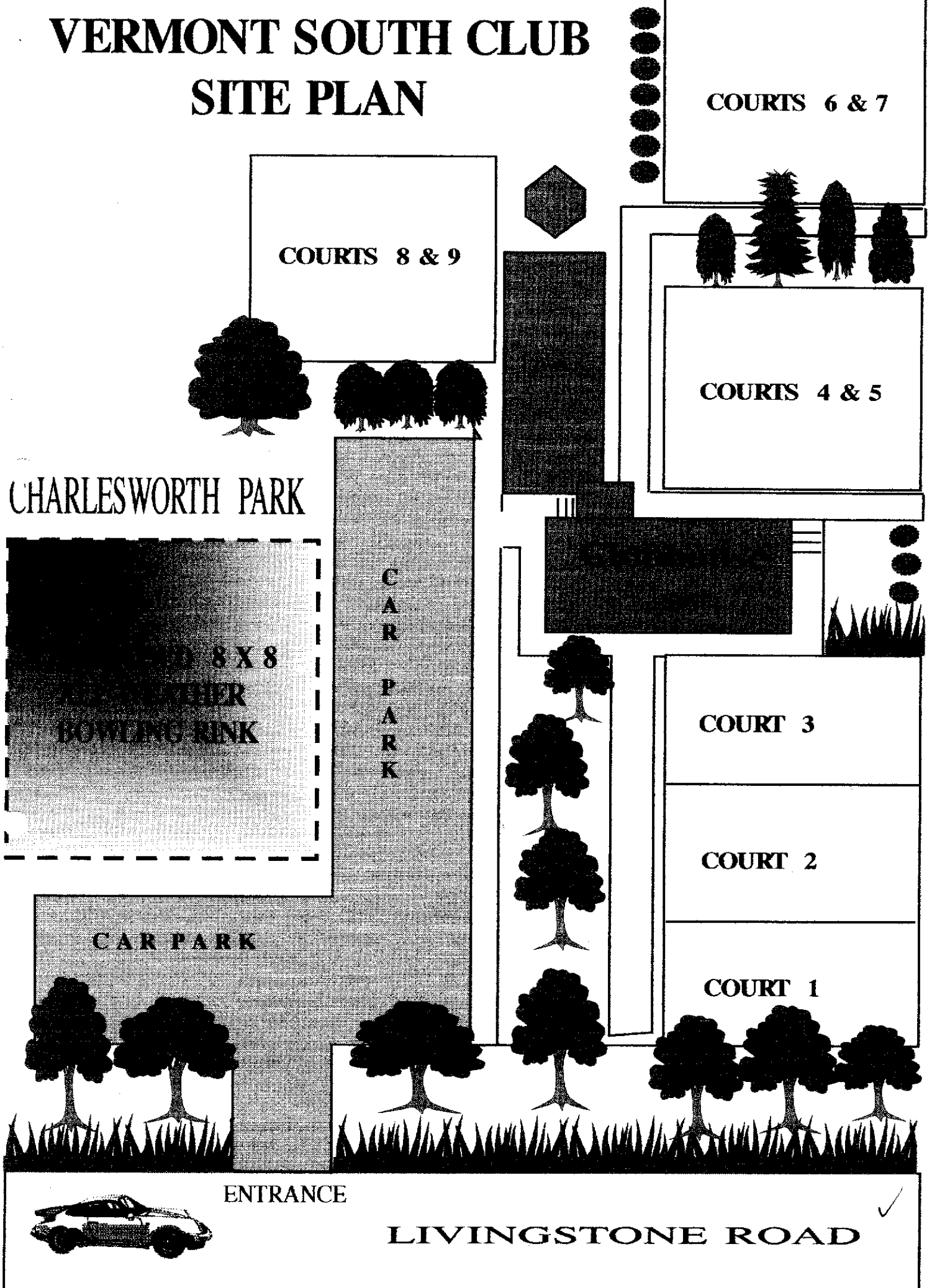
Against;

- Removal of some existing vegetation would be required.
- The overall balance of Charlesworth Park would be affected.

In recognising the aging of both the club members and the community, a survey was undertaken to examine the level of recreational facilities available to senior members of the community. It was found that apart from Morak Golf Course and two driving ranges, there were no other apparent sporting facilities available. There are five bowling greens situated north of Canterbury Road in the City of Nunawading, but none situated on the South side. This, along with the construction of a retirement village 100 metres down Livingstone Road from the VSCTC, was a major shaping factor in the proposed development of the 8 x 8 all-weather bowling green. Although the green has not been built yet, it is only a matter of time before the bowling green is available to all members of the VSCTC.

³ Waverley Gazette Region prepares for an aging population Wednesday, July 25, 1990 - pg. 19

VERMONT SOUTH CLUB SITE PLAN



Conclusion

The VSCTC has recently had its name changed to the Vermont South Club (VSC). This was to convey the message that it wasn't just a tennis club, but a sporting club offering a whole range of sports and social events. The word Community that was contained in the original name, was an indication that the club welcomed all members in the community, and conveyed a friendly atmosphere that was felt by all involved with the Club. ✓

As a member of the VSC, I can't begin to describe the positive concepts the club enhances. Always in favour of junior and senior participation, encouraging play for fun and not harping ✓ on the need for intense competition. The club hosted the Inaugural OZ Tennis Awareness Day, organised by Paul McNamee, an idea which has now been duplicated by many clubs throughout Melbourne. A member of the club gives up her time to coach disabled children every second weekend, which is also related to OZ Tennis Day. The family atmosphere at the club is maintained despite the increasing numbers. This is done by having sausage sizzles, quiz nights, golf days, social tennis nights, round robins and weekly social events.

My presentation has tracked the development of the VSC; from a small, five court club with a tin-shed clubhouse and no toilet facilities; to a nine-court complex offering darts, indoor-bowls, table-tennis, lawn bowls, tennis, spa, sauna, two-licensed bars, excellent kitchen facilities in both the upper and lower clubhouses, and excellent toilet facilities.

The VSC has undergone dramatic changes in its fifteen year history. As mentioned, the need for a local club and the case of an aging population were large influences on many of the developments. The VSC provides facilities better than any other in the area of Glen Waverley, Vermont South, and arguably the City of Nunawading. A phenomenal performance for such a young club, and a great credit to the Vermont South Club's officials, members, coaches and local residents.

Craig,

Your paper is presented extremely well. The high quality of expression, attention to detail and focus on the vital shaping factors is commendable. You may have considered the roles of various levels of government since the 1970's in realising and accepting some responsibilities for the provision of community sport and recreation. Also the theoretical bases of life-long leisure pursuits may have been looked at.

Good Work.





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pg. 14 & 19

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Mulgrave seniors have a real bowl

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By Greg Russo

Vermont South Club Newsletters

Interview with current Vice-President

Jill Raymond

Wednesday, September 1, 1993