

Tony Darroch – International Umpire and Wellington Player, Manager and Committee Member

Tony was born in Wellington (1934). His father Robert was a Wellington Table Tennis Association Vice President. Tony first played in table tennis at age 10. Bill Scott, in the top floor of the building Tony lived in, had a table tennis table. Tony was taking tennis lessons from Tommy Williams who suggest that he play table tennis. So at age 11 he went to a table tennis club at the Newtown Primary School in Russell Terrace.

Tony went to Wellington College (1947-51) and boarded there from the Fifth Form (1949). There was a table at Firth House to practice on. Tony (15) played fellow Wellington College student and future NZ Men's Singles Champion Murray Dunn (13) in a curtain raiser to the New Zealand v England Men's Test (1949). Tony won the single game 33-31. Tony was selected in the 1949 Wellington Under 16 Boys Team in the annual match against Hutt Valley (won 10-2). In 1951 Tony won the Wellington Secondary Schools Senior Boys Singles, The Wellington Open Second Grade Singles and Doubles (with Roy Lea) and the Manawatu Boy's Singles. He and Murray Dunn won the Wellington and Hutt Valley Open under 18 Boys Doubles. Also the Wellington Under 18 Mixed Doubles with Helen Dykes.

Tony was also a good tennis player, representing Wellington as a junior in the Slazenger Shield (1951-53). He and Murray Dunn won the 1949, 1950 and 1953 Wellington Junior Boy's Doubles. Tony reached the Quarter finals of the 1952 NZ Junior Boy's Singles and was runner up in the 1952 and 1953 NZ Junior Boy's Doubles with Murray Dunn. He played at the Island Bay Tennis Club and was the Island Bay Club Men's Singles Champion in 1955-56 and 1956-57.

In 1951, Tony first played interclub for the Te Tapu Ranga Club. The one club team meet at Bill Wah's garage in Adelaide Road, Newtown, Wellington. His team was Dennis Catley, Dave Marple and Alan Robinson. In 1952 Tony played in A Grade with Dave, Alan and Ron Sandilands. Ron had won the 1951 Under 18 NZ Boys Singles and Doubles with Murray Dunn. Dave and Alan were to win the 1952 NZ Under 18 Boy's Doubles, and Dave also won the 1952 NZ Under 18 Mixed Doubles with M Emery. Tony was selected for the Wellington Men's Team for the NZ Championships.

In 1953 Tony, Dave and Alan joined the University Club and played in The University Team in A Grade with O G Collins. Tony represented Victoria University at the NZ University Tournament in 1954 where Victoria won the teams and he won the Men's Doubles with Alan Robinson and Mixed Doubles with Elizabeth Lesser. Tony was selected for the NZ University Men's Team which played Wellington (Lost 0-12).

Tony represented Wellington Men's Team at the NZ Championships (1952-54 and 1956). The highlight was in 1954 where he was the Player/Manager of the Men's Team and Manager of the Women's Team. Both teams won their Teams Competition. Tony was on the Wellington Association Committee (1954-56 and 1961-62).

Tony won the 1956 Nelson Open Men's Singles. Also the following Men's Doubles Titles. He won the 1952 Bush Open with Dave Marple and the 1954 Wanganui Open with Hugh Lauder. Also the 1955 Bush Open, 1955 and 1956 Wairarapa Open with John Crossley. In the Mixed Doubles he won the 1952 Wairarapa Open, 1953 Bush Open, 1954 Hutt Valley and Manawatu Open all with Thyra McGregor, Also the 1956 Marlborough and Nelson Open Mixed Doubles with Val Cousins. In 1957 Tony married Val Cousins and they won the 1958 Wairarapa Open Mixed Doubles.

Val had been in the Wellington Women's Team (1953-56, 1958) and was the top ranked Wellington Woman in 1954 and 1958. Val won the 1955 Hutt Valley Open Women Doubles (With Ann Wah), 1956 Nelson Open Women Singles and the 1956 Wellington Open Women Doubles (with Thyra McGregor). Later she took up running and was the first winner of the Women's section of the Rotorua Marathon (1974).

Tony and Val moved to Palmerston North in 1963. Their four children all played table tennis but only son Malcolm continued on with the sport. Malcolm was NZ Under 18 Boys Singles Champion (1975) and represented NZ in the Junior Boys, Men's and Veteran Men's.

In 1965 Tony passed the provincial umpires exam. He stopped playing table tennis in 1980 to concentrate on umpiring. In 1983 Tony and Gary Farquhar attended a umpiring course in Hong Kong. In 1984 they both passed the International Umpires Exam. Tony umpired in the 1985 Commonwealth Championships (Isle of Man) and 1985 World Championships (Göteborg, Sweden). Tony and Val lived in London (1985-96). He umpired at many English weekend tournaments, often travelling with Surrey umpires Terry Carpenter and Terry Vance. In 1988 Tony was selected to umpire at the Olympics (Seoul, South Korea). In 1996 Tony and Val left London and returned to New Zealand to live in Wellington.

Tony returned to playing table tennis in 2014 as he had entered the World Veterans Championships in Henderson, Auckland. He plays table tennis at the mid week club at Newtown Stadium, Wellington on Monday morning and Wednesday afternoon and at the Empire Club (Petone) on Tuesday and Thursday morning.

Information for this article was provided by Tony Darroch, Wellington Table Tennis Annual Reports, New Zealand Table Tennis Annual Reports, TTNZ Chronicles, The Salient (Victoria University of Wellington Student Newspaper), The Dominion Newspaper, Wellington Tennis Annual Reports and the Island Bay Tennis Club.

The following photos are from the TTNZ Photo Archives.



1952 Wellington Table Tennis Men's and Women's Teams.

L/R back: Thyra McGregor, **Tony Darroch**, John Crossley, Murray Dunn,
Colin Shewan, Charlotte Savage.

front: Ann Leong, Laurie Wilson (Men's captain), Bill Jopson (manager), Audrey Hughes (Women's
captain), Pam Smith.



1953 Wellington Table Tennis Men's and Women's Teams.
 L/R back standing: Thyra McGregor, John Sigley, Eileen Brown, John Crossley,
 Murray Dunn, Pat Quinn
 Center seated: Colin Shewan, Audrey Hughes, Keith Pratt (manager),
 Laurie Wilson, Charlotte Savage, Front On floor: Ann Wah, **Tony Darroch**



1954 Wellington Table Tennis Men's and Women's Teams.
 Winners of the New Zealand Interprovincial Men's and Women's Teams Tournament.
 Left – Teague Shield (Women) and Kean Shield (Men).
 L/R: back: Pat Quinn, Ivan Houghton, John Crossley, Colin Shewan, Val Cousins
 Middle: John Sigley, Audrey Hughes, **Tony Darroch**, Murray Dunn, Eileen Brown
 Front: Thyra McGregor, Ann Wah



1956 Wellington Table Tennis Men's and Women's Teams.
L/R Back: Joyce Bratton, **Tony Darroch**, Alan Robinson, Brian Sim, Val Cousins.
Front: Angela Williamson, Colin Shewan, Bill Jopson (Manager) Eileen Brown, Val White.

-Malcolm Wong