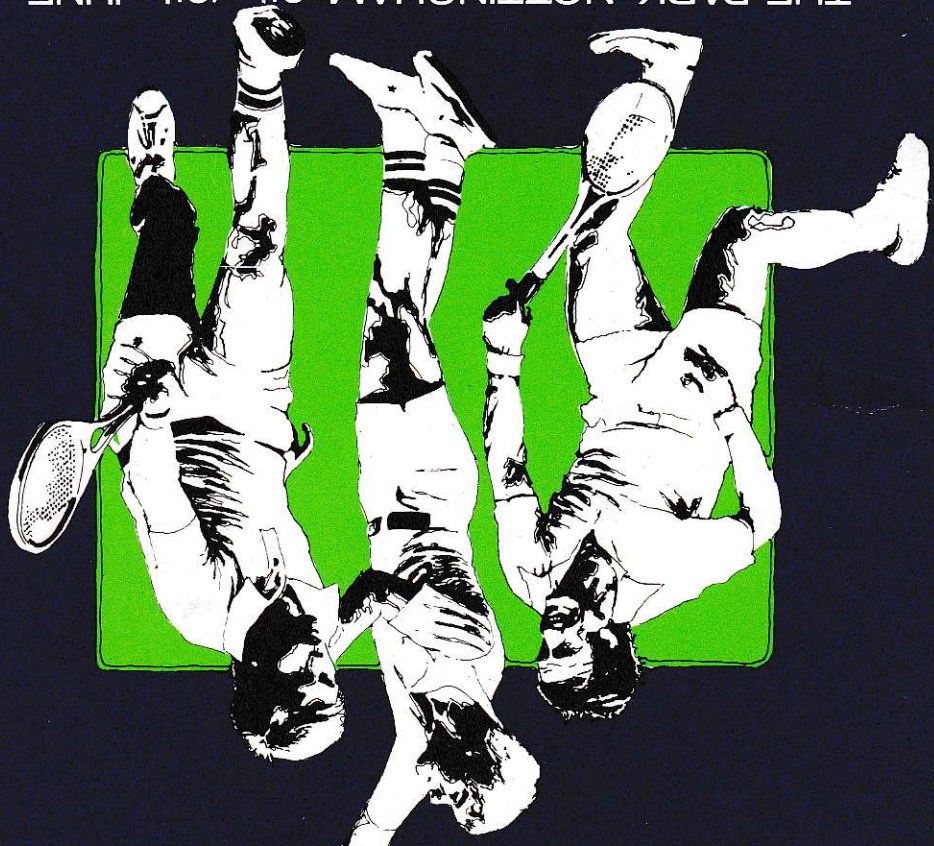


THE PARK, NOTTINGHAM. 6th-12th JUNE
First major grass court tournament
of the 1977 season



JOHN PLAYER
TENNIS
TOURNAMENT
1977



Geoffrey Kent
Chairman and Managing Director
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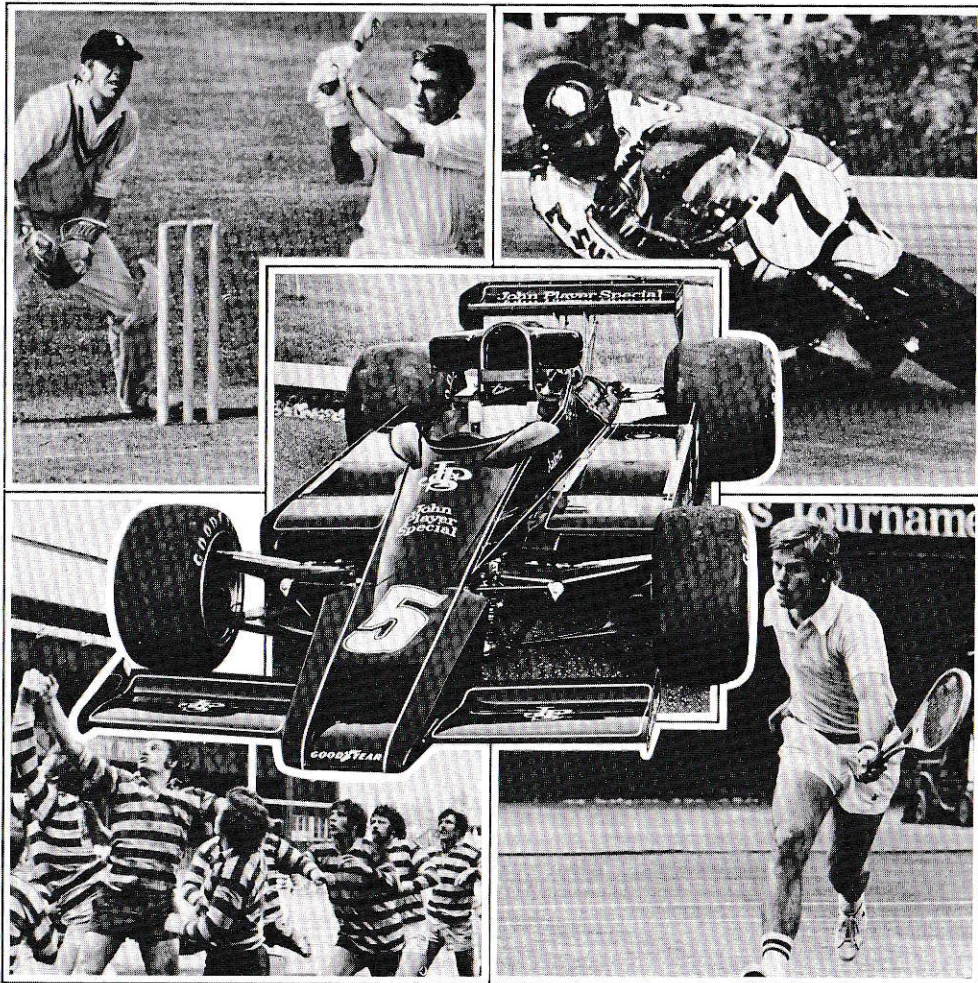
TENNIS IN CENTENARY YEAR

This is John Player's Centenary Year. I hope therefore that the tournament will prove to be the best ever. Certainly it will be the biggest! By some ingenious planning the seating capacity has risen to over 5,000 – an interesting development when compared with the 500 seats available when our association with the tournament began eleven years ago.

The appearance of today's international male tennis stars with some of the best-loved players of the fifties and sixties in the Grand Masters event should ensure an event worthy of any centenary.

This festival of tennis could not take place without the help and support of the Notts. L.T.A. They have been involved with the tournament from its humble beginnings and have seen it develop into one of the leading grass court events in world tennis. I would like to express our thanks to them for their efforts.

The John Player tournament fills the first of four weeks of international tennis in this country and, given good weather, I am sure that it will provide a superb prelude to the Wimbledon Championships which, like John Player, celebrate their Centenary this year.



PLAYERS' IN ACTION

TENNIS ON TELEVISION

by Dan Maskell

Sometime last March Sam Leitch, Head of B.B.C. T.V. Sport, announced the signing of agreements with eight major sporting organisations. He said that "there would be comprehensive coverage of the John Player Tennis Event in Nottingham . . . and the Women's Federation Cup at Eastbourne. And, of course, there will be Wimbledon, for which a new five-year agreement has just been signed." He added, "The John Player Tournament sees the start of the most concentrated four weeks of tennis ever televised in this country. After consultation with the tennis authorities we are aiming to help build a European grass court season to match anything in the world."

I can think of nothing more likely to please the many tennis enthusiasts who plead for more tennis on T.V. — and I can think of no better Tournament to whet the appetite for Centenary Wimbledon than this John Player Tournament here in Nottingham.

The atmosphere, environment and spirit in which a big Championship is played is difficult to convey in words, but one cannot fail to be aware of it. There is a "magic" about Wimbledon that everyone who has been there, if only for a day, feels and remembers. I think it is an amalgam of tradition, quality of the entry and standard of play, magnificent courts and general conditions, superb organisation which endeavours to fulfil the all-round needs of world-class players and, most important, the comfort and well-being of the enormous crowds. The late Chairman of the All England Club, Herman David, perhaps got nearest to the answer when I interviewed him on T.V. some years ago and he ventured, "Perhaps the secret of the continuing success of Wimbledon is that we are lucky in being able to stage one of the world's great sporting events in a garden-party atmosphere, supported by the most wonderfully loyal and enthusiastic spectators."

I am certainly not alone in feeling that the "John Player" at Nottingham has something of this uniqueness which sets it apart from so many other big tournaments. In the few short years that it has been played it has already built the foundation of a tradition and every year the crowds grow larger and more responsive and, of course, this intimate area of Nottingham has breathed the very life and soul of tennis almost since the game began.

What fascinating reading is provided in the articles, "Notes on the Notts. Lawn Tennis Association" and "A brief history of the Notts. Open Tennis Tournament."

When from my Commentators' "perch" I look out over the heads of the crowds and the really splendid grass courts, comparable with those of Wimbledon, and behind them into the long, lovely green valley beyond, I feel very indebted to Mr. Eric Attewell, a stalwart of Nottingham tennis for so many years, a member of this Tournament Committee, Chair-

man of the Council of the Lawn Tennis Association in 1967 and subsequently an Honorary Life Vice-President.

It was he who so kindly filled the gaps in my knowledge of the tennis history that was made in that valley so many years ago and which has enriched so much more deeply that distant view which I wish all of you reading this could share — especially when it is bathed in warm June sunshine. Let me quote from his notes, — “The Park and Newcastle L.T.C.’s mentioned in my notes have now amalgamated and are known as the Nottingham L.T.C. Looking down the valley from your B.B.C. “tower” you see the County Ground of the Notts. L.T.A., then the English Bowling Association and finally the courts of the Nottingham Lawn Tennis Club.

In 1913 a Davis Cup Match, America v. Germany was played on the far court of the Nottingham L.T.C. on July 10th, 11th and 12th. R.N. (Dick) Williams beat O.Kreutzer 6.4, 6.2, 4.6, 6.1 and M.E. (Maurice) McLoughlin beat O. Froitzheim 5.7, 2.6, 6.4, 6.2, 6.2. McLoughlin and H.H. Hackett beat F.W. Rahe and H. Kleinscroth 6.4, 2.6, 6.3, 8.6. It was reported that over 2000 spectators watched the Doubles match and that McLoughlin’s service was so terrific that the ball often bounced over the fence into the road.”

Maurice Evans McLoughlin is, of course, a tennis legend and from the section, “All-time Greats” in that indispensable annual reference book, “World of Tennis ‘76,” (which, incidentally, no commentator, tennis journalist or fan would be without), I quote the following, “Born 7.1.1890, died 10.12.57. The “Californian Comet” was the first notable exponent of the cannon-ball service. Fiercely effective with volley and smash he was U.S. Champion in 1912/13 and his appearance was, as a contemporary remarked, a sign of the way the modern game was developing. His spectacular style had considerable appeal.

When he met New Zealander, Anthony Wilding (who had won Wimbledon 1910, 11 and 12) for the Title in 1913, “there was such an indecent crush round the barriers of the Centre Court that, to avoid serious injury, several ladies had to be lifted over by policemen into the security of the arena.” Wilding beat him 8.6, 6.3, 10.8, but McLoughlin had the consolation of winning two rubbers in the American capture of the Davis Cup from Britain at Wimbledon. “(This was in the Challenge Round, after the American Team’s victory over the Germans at Nottingham). McLoughlin did not play after the 1914-18 war. His aggressive style was said to have burnt him out.”

The Nottingham crowds at that 1913 Davis Cup Tie not only saw this 23 year old American sensation, but also his team-mate, the young Dick Williams, who came back after the war and won the Wimbledon Doubles Title in 1920 — and confirmed his reputation of being a master at taking the ball early in the bounce.

The German pair, too, were no sluggards for Rahe and Kleinscroth came to Nottingham as

the Wimbledon Doubles Finalists, defeated by the British Title-holders, Roper-Barrett and C.P. Dixon. Twenty years later, in 1933, Roper-Barrett was the non-playing Captain of the British Davis Cup Team that won the Davis Cup from the holders — France, on their very slow hard courts in Paris, and I had the proud honour to be Coach to that wonderful Team of Fred Perry, Bunny Austin, Pat Hughes and Harry Lee. Perhaps you will understand why my feelings are so deep and warm whenever I look from my “tower” down into that historic valley.

A love of the history of his sport is an essential part of the make-up of a commentator and so, too, is a wide circle of friends like Eric Attewell who give so freely of their wealth of experience and local knowledge. Without such help it would be infinitely harder to achieve what I wrote in that superb book, edited by Max Robertson, “The Encyclopedia of Tennis,” “The commentator’s job is to enlighten the viewer and involve him. If he succeeds he is, in a way, with the rest of the T.V. Team, fulfilling the aim of the B.B.C. from its earliest days, ‘to inform, educate and entertain’.”

Team work is the very essence of good television and makes a particular appeal to me because much of my life has been concerned with coaching Davis Cup, Wightman Cup and Junior Teams and managing national teams abroad.

The B.B.C. is covering on T.V. five days of this Tournament instead of three days as in the past — Wednesday 8th June to Sunday, 12th June. The transmission are likely to be along the lines of last year — live in the afternoons with edited highlights in the evenings. The team to cope with this is approximately forty strong and a four-camera unit will be used. I am quite incapable of giving you an accurate and detailed description of how a programme gets from the scene of action on to your screen at home and, thank goodness, I can always make the excuse that space in this programme is limited.! However, the following will give you some idea of the range of the operation.

The Control Vehicle (the Scanner) is the hub of the whole business. The Producer, Fred Viner and his assistant, Miss Sheila Scott, are centred here and are backed up and relieved by Johnnie Watherston and his Assistant, Miss Judy Jones. They in turn are supported by the Engineering Manager, Ken Page of Midlands B.B.C. together with the Vision Supervisor, Sound Supervisor and Sound engineers. The Mobile Videotape Recording machines have their vehicle and personnel, all concerned with their highly specialist duties and in the Commentary area there are two commentators, the Link man, David Vine, an Outside Broadcast stage-manager and a Caption operator.

But let me emphasize that each one of the 40 strong team has a vital part to play, and never did this come home to me more than during that unbelievably brilliant final last year when Ilie Nastase and Jimmy Connors defied the wind, heavy rain and wet courts until they

were forced to stop at 1 set all and 1 game all. I shall not forget the camera crews and others in the B.B.C. team exposed to the elements struggling to keep going right to the very end when the players had left the court and the capacity crowd, soaking wet, were still wildly applauding. One felt very privileged to be part of such a team.

Many of you reading this will remember that miraculous tennis when Nastase and Connors risked life and limb just 48 hours before the start of Wimbledon and by so doing paid John Player, the Tournament Committee and the Nottingham spectators the greatest possible compliment. They were responding to the "spirit" of this particular tournament and, I'm sure, to the regard they have for the Tournament Director, former Davis Cup player, Tony Pickard.

In the warmth and comfort of the hotel after that never-to-be-forgotten Final I was paying my thanks to Nastase — personally and on behalf of the B.B.C. team — and expressing surprise that he and Connors played so long in the rain and took such risks, to which he replied, quite simply but very sincerely, "Well, we like it here."

What more need be said.

A RARE DISPLAY

by Nigel Clark

Lawn Tennis Correspondent of The Daily Mirror

It was the day when the rain came . . . the soaking Saturday when two of the world's great tennis stars gave the game back to the public. Ilie Nastase of Rumania, and Jimmy Connors of the United States, proved that today's rash of rich young globetrotters don't always play for just the pay. The two men who have been involved in the major proportion of the world's tennis headlines, last year saved the final of the John Player tournament from a wash out!

They played the singles final in a rain storm, and stayed on court for over an hour until the conditions became so dangerous, that further tennis was impossible. Television commentator Dan Maskell remarked at the time: "I have never seen anything quite like it, their performance was a marvellous advertisement for the game."

Perhaps no two other players would have even ventured on court in the first place. But Nasty and Jimbo go out of their way to be different.

Nastase with his rebel reputation had clashed head on with the organisers a year earlier, just before the 1975 event began. After a burst of bad behaviour across Europe he was asked for a promise of good conduct and refused. He also pulled out of the tournament.

Nasty's eccentric tennis stage act, split fans into two camps, those who loved him . . . or loathed him. But he was, and still is the number one drawing card in British tennis.

It was the same with Connors. Bumptious, brash and brilliant. He had his share of admirers, and those with who he was less than popular. But he was the young pretender to the throne as world number one, and so often the straight man to Nastase's clown act.

And both, would have been well within their rights not to set a foot on court with Wimbledon just two days away.

The rain, forecast for the finals, began to spit down at lunchtime. The finish of the Australia v. New Zealand Davis Cup tie, had already seen Brian Fairlie skidding and injuring himself on the slippery surface as he lost to John Newcombe.

Would Nastase and Connors play for the £10,000 first prize, or even go on court at all?

They did, and at great risk. The centre court stadium was crammed with spectators huddled in raincoats and under umbrellas. Others had climbed trees to get a view of two great players, who could also introduce the kind of slapstick comedy Morecambe and Wise would be proud of.

A few months earlier during the Dewar Cup doubles at London's Albert Hall, Nastase and Connors had appeared on court wearing bow ties, bowler hats and sipping champagne. Their singles duel a few nights earlier had been full of fun and great tennis.

And it was to happen again. The rain had soaked the court, and when the preliminary inspection was made, Nastase and Connors volunteered to try it. They went on to play marvellously for the next hour producing delightful tennis, and break-neck bravery. It was a skid-pan surface, the balls were so wet they flung off a halo of moisture, both men took heavy falls, both produced unbelievable shots, and, a match that began as a fun final for the fans, became a deadly serious confrontation.

Connors took the first set 6-2. Nastase the second 6-4, showing off a battery of magical shots, sometimes played in the middle of a 15 foot skid, or slide.

Their respective ladies, Dominique Nastase, and Marjorie Wallace, the former Miss World, had sat with the fans in the rain, laughing and sharing the fun.

Connors had in fact borrowed an umbrella and played with it over one shoulder in the early knockabout nonsense. But once Nastase began to produce his magic, Connors took the

match much more seriously. Suddenly Nastase began to talk to him, and tease him. It got to Connors who in a yell of exasperation shouted to the crowd. "I like this guy a lot, but . . ." then to the Rumanian he yelled "Do you think you could play just two points quietly?"

It was like that for the match. Exceptional tennis, exemplary behaviour, and it left the crowd in debt to two men who had taken real chances to entertain them.

It was 1-1 in the final set before they had to quit for safety sake as the rain became a down-pour. Connors limped off with a slight strain saying "Don't worry — it's nothing, a hot bath and a massage will put that right. We had to stop: the court was just too dangerous. It was pneumonia weather."

And said Nastase: "I too was worried about injury, at times I couldn't even keep my legs together". I stood with them in the referees' room as they peeled off soaking sweaters and saturated shirts and shorts. Both were just happy the fans had got their money's worth.

The two shared the winners and runners-up prizes, taking £7,875 back to London on the six o'clock train, and sharing the beautiful individual prizes of crystal glassware.

Said tournament organiser Tony Pickard: "Any debt we may have felt Nastase owed us for what happened in 1975, has been handsomely repaid."

And the referee Calvin Dubois added: "I was astonished the match went on so long in such dangerous conditions."

As a public relations exercise for tennis, Nastase and Connors had pulled a master stroke.

Playing in the rain did an awful lot for the image of the tennis player, Nasty and Jimbo blew a gale of fresh air back into the game.

AROUND THE TENNIS VENUES

Lawn Tennis Correspondent of The Observer.

by Ronald Atkin

There's an excellent novel, written by Terry Venables and a friend of mine Gordon Williams, called "They Used to Play on Grass". Its theme is the state of British football towards the close of this century, but its title could well apply to the present condition of lawn tennis, a sport which takes place less and less frequently on grass these days.

Even the turf at New York's Forest Hills was ripped up two years ago and replaced by hard courts which are the colour, if not quite the texture, of River Trent mud. The country's

governing body promptly followed by discarding the word 'lawn' from its title and is now simply the United States Tennis Association.

Millions of people all over the world indulge in tennis, with uninhibited zest and varying degrees of skill, in venues which range from the exotic to the downright scuffy. But for lawn tennis — the stuff that's still played on grass, anyway — Britain remains very much the Mecca at this time of the year.

A large part of this perennial attraction is the scenic settings for the British summer season, such as Nottingham, Beckenham, Eastbourne and Queen's, leading up to the climax of Wimbledon. John Player are fortunate indeed that in their home city they can stage this tournament in The Park, that splendidly elegant amphitheatre in the very heart of Nottingham. Here is history and beauty to provide an admirable backdrop to the John Player Tournament.

The area, in the very shadow of Nottingham Castle's rock, was first enclosed as a park by Henry II and a survey of Sherwood Forest carried out in 1609 revealed that 'Nottingham Park' then had an area of 129 acres. It used to be plentifully stocked with deer, which were hunted well into the 18th century and these days it remains a city centre refuge for smaller forms of wild life such as foxes, who literally left their mark on a recent tournament by scratching up one of the main courts just before play was due to commence.

At Beckenham another form of 'wild life', the club cricketer, is actually encouraged to make his marks on their tennis courts. All sixteen of Beckenham's grass courts are situated on the non-playing area of the cricket ground at this London suburban venue, and the organisers of Beckenham Week feel that cricketers' spikes help to aerate the turf in readiness for the arrival from Europe's clay courts of tennis stars anxious to get in some practice on grass in readiness for Wimbledon.

Unlike Nottingham, Beckenham is unable to pay out hefty prize money but it does share the John Player Tournament's friendly and relaxed attitude towards its competitors. For instance, last year Jimmy Connors had a most unusual request for the Beckenham officials. Could they arrange to seat his girl friend, former Miss World Marjorie Wallace, on a specially high chair so that he could easily spot her in the crowd when he was playing? This was done, though it didn't prevent Connors losing to Roscoe Tanner in the final!

This sort of friendliness and co-operation, together with the enthusiastic support of the spectators, is usually amply repaid. Remember last year's Nottingham final, when Connors and Ilie Nastase both risked serious injury on the eve of Wimbledon by playing two sets in steady rain in front of a soaked, capacity audience before the conditions forced them to abandon the match and share the title?

Let us hope that for this year's final the weather is kinder, and that it remains fine for the next three weeks, since Eastbourne's charming seaside lawns will be hosting the Federation Cup, the women's world team championship, and the manicured courts of Queen's Club in London are again, after a break of four years, the scene of a major championship immediately before Wimbledon's historic centenary fortnight gets under way.
