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15<sup>th</sup> December 2017

## A (year-end) open letter to the SA tennis community.

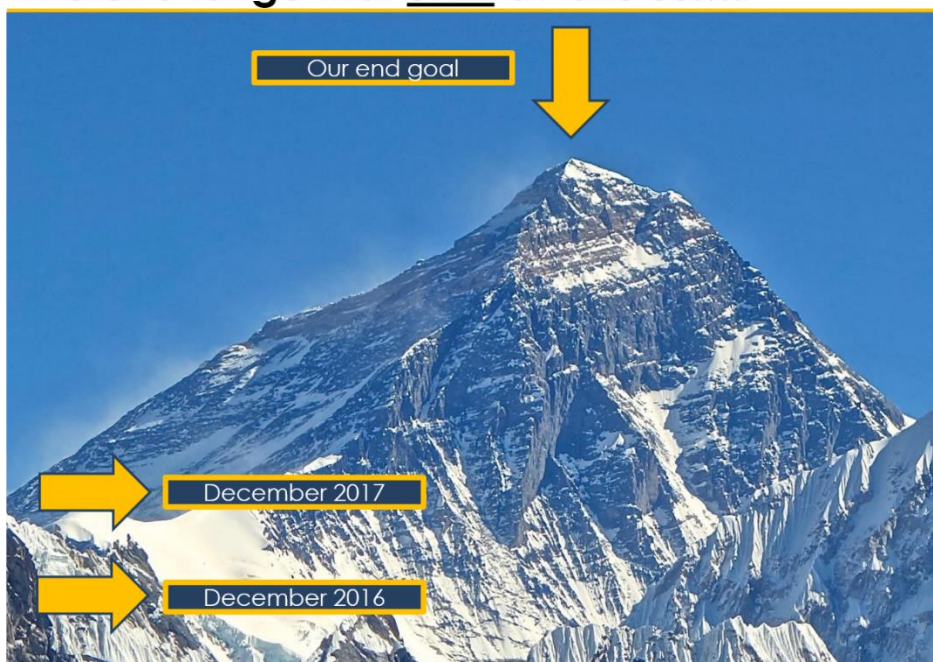
My first anniversary as CEO of Tennis South Africa has come and gone in a blur. It has been a fascinating year in the job and a massive learning curve for me. When I sent out my first letter to the SA tennis community, in late 2016, I knew very little about our sport - I am sure many of you would argue that, a year later, I still know very little!

Jokes aside, December is a natural reflection point and for me the critical question TSA needs to ask itself, at the end of every calendar year is as follows - **Are we, as a Federation, in a better position now than we were a year ago?**

The answer must be **yes!** This statement in no ways down plays the many areas of weakness within our sport, but we should be pleased by the progress made in 2017. There is a group of people working hard behind the scenes to improve things and the interventions we have made this year have been many and varied - some of these improvements are detailed in the info boxes on the pages that follow.

So, progress made, but this is not a time to be patting ourselves on the back and telling ourselves how wonderful we are - because we are most definitely not. Indeed, TSA's view of our current momentum, within the overall context of tennis in South Africa, is best summed up by the below image....

### The challenge that STILL awaits us....



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CEO: R. Glover.



The only way to climb a mountain is to put one foot in front of the other, keep going and when you reach an obstacle in your path - either move around it or climb over it. That is exactly what we have done in 2017 and will continue to do in 2018.

Tennis people are highly intelligent (I am sure you all concur!) and so tend to also be highly opinionated. You might not always agree with the decisions made by the Federation – and we don't always get it right, but I can promise you we are trying to do the right things in the right way.

It is a massive privilege to be CEO of TSA – a responsibility that I take very seriously. Parents, players, coaches, volunteers, administrators - you are all shareholders in our sport and ultimately, both I and the TSA office work for you.

## So, what is in store for TSA in 2018?

Well a lot of things, including – growing beach tennis, the roll out of our new junior national squads and the professionalisation of our junior national team structures, amongst others. However - two inter-linked areas that I, as CEO, will be especially focused on will be:

- Schools Tennis and
- Transformation & Development.

Let's talk about **schools tennis** first.

One area where I have dropped the ball in my first year as CEO of TSA ('only one?' you shout) is in the schools space. As a Federation we have not been focused enough on this critical area – the very foundation on which our sport is built. This will start to change in 2018, especially in terms of primary schools.

Expect to see more red and orange ball tennis, a pilot project (via our TSA Growthpoint Development Centres) where we will partner with primary schools (near these Centres) to deliver tennis as part of their physical education programmes and hopefully a national primary schools tournament to create some hype around school tennis.

### SUSTAINABILITY

#### improvements in 2017:

1. Secured six sponsors of varying sizes – including a new headline sponsor in Growthpoint Properties.
2. Started to execute on our new transformation policy – including the roll out of our TSA Growthpoint Development Centres – first in the Western Cape, with Gauteng to follow early in 2018.

### PARTICIPATION

#### improvements in 2017:

3. Launched the TSA Coaches Centre of Apprenticeship programme – 70 accredited centres and counting.
4. Rolled out the Growthpoint Top Guns – national club championships.
5. Elevated the tournament experience at key junior events – e.g. Growthpoint Super 8s.

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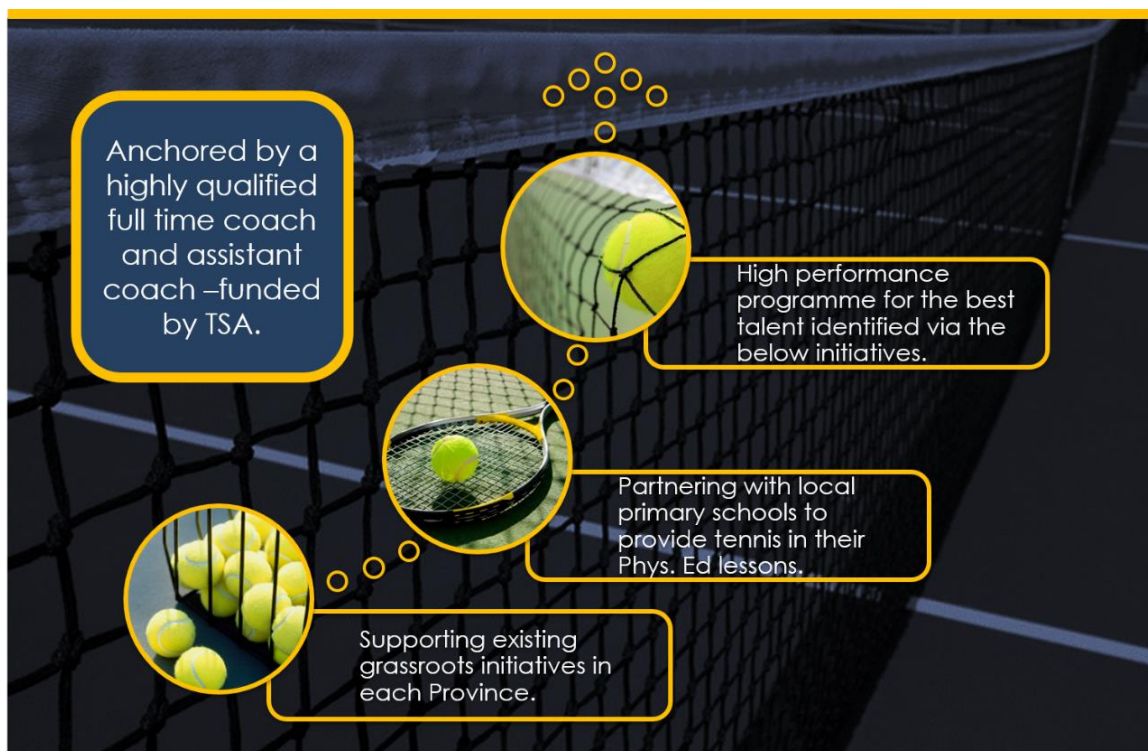
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The **transformation space** is massive growth opportunity for tennis, but then I have mentioned this many times before. The talking (about transformation) stops now and the doing begins.

The roll out of our Growthpoint Development Centres has started (first in the Western Cape with two more to follow in other Provinces, early in 2018) and while these Centres will need some time to find their (proverbial) feet, they are critical galvanising forces for grassroots tennis development. A very high-level overview of their focus areas is detailed below:



The litmus test for these Centres will be how they integrate with the existing grassroots development projects within their relevant Provinces.

Staying in the transformation space, a project I am especially excited about is our new coaching mentorship programme that launches in 2018. The objective of the project is to widen the demographic of registered coaches in South Africa, by creating more sustainable coaching opportunities for both black and female coaches.

The mentorship programme will include:

- sponsorship of the selected coaches' registration fees for 2018,
- skills training (including first aid, computer skills and business administration),
- work integrated learning opportunities at either TSA accredited Centres of Apprenticeship or TSA Growthpoint Development Centres,
- assistance with job placements.

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The full details of this project are on the TSA website and it is well worth an in-depth read via: <http://www.tennissa.co.za/w/blog/tsa-to-pilot-coaches-mentorship-programme>

## In Conclusion.

Like many of you the TSA office is tired, after a long year. Indeed, I am very tired and a bit grumpy. We have pushed hard this year, but we will rest up over the holiday season and will return ready to move tennis forward again. We will be relentless until our sport is back in its rightful position in South Africa.

Finally – a special festive season thank you to the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers, administrators and officials who work across the country at all levels of tennis, for little or no pay. I am not sure we always appreciate the many hours you spend in and around a tennis court – keeping our game alive. Thank you for everything you do. Without you our sport would not exist.

To quote Margaret Mead – ***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”***

A happy holiday season to all within tennis - have fun, but stay safe!

### HIGH-PERFORMANCE improvements in 2017:

6. Launched the new junior national squad structure.
7. Signed an agreement with Stellenbosch University to build a world class national tennis centre.
8. Secured leading South African ATP coaches (Neville Godwin and Jeff Coetzee) as high-performance consultants.
9. Implemented a monthly financial support package for some of our key players – starting with the Davis Cup team, with the intention to extend to our Fed Cup team in 2018.
10. Davis Cup: Promotion.

**Do you have some ideas about how we can improve and grow the sport in South Africa? If so, please contact me via: [richard@tennissa.co.za](mailto:richard@tennissa.co.za).**

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