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## What does TSA do for me?

### An open letter from the CEO to the South African tennis community.

It has been just over two months since I joined Tennis South Africa as CEO. I am sure many of you have been wondering what I have been up to. So, as we approach the end of 2016 it feels like a natural point to share my views on the current state of tennis, but also, far more interestingly, our new high level plan to grow the game in SA.

Over the course of my very short time at TSA I have tried to speak to (and more importantly listen to) as many people as possible. To those of you I have not spoken to yet – I will get to you soon! This has been a fascinating and humbling experience, perhaps one of the best of my professional working career.

Everyone I have engaged with has been very open and honest about the state of tennis in SA – the challenges and the opportunities. Critically, to a man (and woman) they have said they are desperate to see tennis grow and thrive and will support TSA in whatever way they can.

TSA faces many challenges – financial sustainability being the most pressing and concerning, but I feel very optimistic about the future of our sport in this country. We have a lot of potential to work with because tennis in SA is in many ways a sleeping giant. So, let's work together to awake the giant. Starting with a clear plan.....

*"A good plan  
implemented today is  
better than a perfect  
plan implemented  
tomorrow."*

*General George Patton.*

At the recent TSA board meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> November, the first of our newly constituted board, I presented the proposed growth plan for tennis in SA over the next eight years. It is important to stress that several people have had input into the plan that was presented and it is much the better for their guidance. I was very pleased by the level of interrogation and attention the presentation received during the board meeting. Board members asked me some very probing and hard questions, that had me on the back foot at times. This process of interrogation is critical.

In short, the approved growth plan looks at how we take tennis forward over the next eight years. A very high level graphical summary of the plan is detailed on the following page.

#### Board of Directors:

G. Crookes (President), R. Davids (Vice-President), J.J. Klaasen, Z. Beukes, A. Karam, F. Cassim,  
S. Liebenberg, H. Brody, A.H. Loubser, A.G. Fichardt, R van der Meer, R van 't Hof, D Jaquire, B Visee

CEO: R. Glover





**For those who are interested, the full board presentation is also now available on the Tennis South Africa website.** The full presentation continues some very specific short, medium and long term actions that TSA will be taking from January 2017 onwards. I would welcome your constructive criticism and feedback on the document. I do not for one minute pretend it is a perfect plan and it will not be to everyone's taste, but the point to make is that it is clear and understandable - with very achievable goals.

To all members of our tennis community - We have heard your frustrations and issues and we will be looking to make improvements in 2017. Change will not come as quickly as you may hope, but they are coming. Some of the most immediate steps we will be taking include the following:

## 1. Improving Stakeholder Relations:

There is little doubt that TSA needs to improve its relationships with all stakeholders. TSA exists to serve the wider SA tennis community – not the other way around. As part of this process of improving stakeholder relations – we will:

1. Communicate more (this letter is the start of that process).
2. Collaborate more.
3. Be more visible.
4. Be more transparent.

This may take a bit of time and we will not always get it right, but please hold us accountable to these four commitments.

- **Players (of all ages)** – We want to provide you with the best possible environment to play the game. We want you to be proud of the sport you play.

- **Parents** – We have neglected you. We are now listening to you and want to work more closely with you to reduce the financial burdens you face.
- **Provinces, Clubs & Schools** – We recognise the power of working on a collective basis. We want to collaborate with you to grow the game across South Africa.
- **Coaches** – You worry me. Don't get me wrong – we have some world class coaches and every coach has a role to play in growing the game, but the culture of back-biting must stop. To those coaches who feel alienated by TSA – we want to work with you to help you make a viable living from the game. However, we want you to be part of the (TSA) solution, not part of the problem.
- **SASCOC, Department of Sport & Recreation and other government entities:** We are committed to growing the game across all communities in South Africa. We want to work with you and align ourselves to your objectives.
- **Volunteers:** Finally, I want to mention the many men and women across South Africa who give thousands of unpaid hours (every year) to the sport. We thank you and will be looking to recognise you more in the future. You are the life-blood of our sport and are the true heroes of tennis.

## 2. Organisational Transformation:

Moving forward TSA will be utterly committed to transformation. To do this:

- We will be creating a full-time transformation and development role in the office. This person will be focusing on leveraging what is a huge opportunity for growth. If tennis is to have a vibrant and sustainable future it needs to transform.
- We will also be forming a Transformation and Development Task Force to make recommendations for how we can implement a coherent strategy and roll out plan for this vital space. This task force will be made up of people with real hands on experience of rolling out growth and development programmes. The make-up of this task force will be announced in January and will commence work immediately thereafter.

From an organisational transformation perspective, the TSA office structure will also be re-aligned to the growth plan. The most relevant changes to the structure are:

- **Leon Freimond** moves into a special projects role. TSA has become too reactive and needs to develop a long-term planning capability. Leon has a huge amount of tennis experience and we want to utilise that more effectively to help answer some critical long term questions for the organisation – for example putting the long-term building blocks in place for a potential national tennis centre (or centres). This means we will be looking to recruit **a new head of high performance and coaching**.
- Elsewhere, **Ephraim Motsiane** has been promoted to the Head of Tournaments. Reporting directly to me - he will oversee all TSA tournaments in SA – including the TSA calendar. This is due reward for an outstanding and hard-working man.
- Finally, health allowing, **Mpho Makhoba** will take on the role of Head of Transformation and Development. Mpho has a passion for tennis development and has huge value to offer in this space. She will continue to remain very involved in tennis officiating.

These changes come into effect from January 2017.

### 3. Building a High-Performance Pathway:

A key mandate for TSA is to produce international calibre players and we will be looking very carefully at our player pathway over the coming months – with a special focus on junior tennis:

- We will be forming a High-Performance Task Force to make recommendations as to how we can build a coherent player pathway – from junior level upwards. The group will also recommend a job specification and potential candidates for the new head of high performance and coaching. The members of this group will consist of some of our finest coaches and ex-players and will be announced in January. I am sure everyone will have an opinion on the make-up of this task force but I can guarantee they will be credible.
- We are going to be getting our Junior National Squads up and running. The focus will be on one or two training camps a year and strategic exposure to international competition. This will commence with a small group of Under 18 boys who will be travelling to Australia early in 2017 to participate in the Junior Australian Open – either via qualifying or direct entry into the main draw. It is important to stress that this national squad structure will work in a collaborative way with each player's existing coach or coaches.

### 4. Growing Revenue:

As mentioned earlier, financial sustainability is our most pressing short and medium term concern. This is how we are going to move towards solving the challenge:

- **Driving increased membership:** We currently have just over 10,000 members. We will, via provincial structures, be looking to roll out an aggressive incentive scheme to encourage clubs to grow and/or fully declare their memberships. These incentives could be in the form of cash or equipment. We will need to consult with you about the details and the mechanics around this scheme in early in 2017.
- **Revised sponsorship structure:** Instead of looking for one sponsor to sponsor all of tennis we have segmented tennis to create multiple sponsorship opportunities for all budgets – from R100k upwards. We think this is the most viable way forward for tennis to bring in new sponsors.
- **New formats:** We will be experimenting with two new formats in 2017. Both are with an eye on increasing interest and participation and thereby revenue:
  - **Cardio Tennis:** Subject to us reaching a signed agreement, we are looking to partner with Cardio Tennis from early 2017. Cardio Tennis is a tennis inspired fitness work-out for players and non-players alike.
  - **Beach Tennis:** We are also looking to trial beach tennis. Should it be successful then we will look to roll it out aggressively later in the new year. Beach tennis is exciting and both spectator and participant friendly. Another critical point about the format is that it can also be played on any open area with just a net, two bats and a ball.

- **New revenue streams:** We are busy looking at the entire value chain of tennis to understand where the money flows. The first area we have identified is in the space of tennis related travel and accommodation. Think about the amount of money different parts of tennis spend both on national and international travel. This spend is currently fragmented. Imagine if we could consolidate this spend to reduce travel and accommodation costs for parents, coaches and players, while creating a new revenue stream for TSA, to invest back into the game.

## 5. Proactively raising awareness of the Sport in SA:

We do not have vast amounts of money to market the game in South Africa, so we must be smart about how we do this. Moving forward our focus will be on:

- **Investing in Digital Communication Platforms:** We will be revisiting and investing (what we can) in our social media platforms and website. These are critical communication platforms and we want to cultivate these digital spaces to speak to both the existing tennis community, as well as new tennis fans.
- **Proactive Media Engagement:** We are also committed to becoming the most media friendly sport in SA. Part of this process involves us being proactive, open and accessible to the media – in both the good times and bad.

## And finally....

I started this letter with a question - What does TSA do for me? Over the next 12 months I hope that together we can start to answer this question.

I have no doubt some of you will be sceptical about our ability to deliver on this plan. That is fair enough – we need to show signs of progress before we can win you over. Please keep us on our toes! We might not achieve all we set out to do in the plan – we operate in a very fluid environment in South Africa, that will be either an enabler or barrier to growth over the next few years. However, even if we only achieve 50% of the plan, then tennis will find itself in a much more positive space.

*"The best way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."*

*– Walt Disney –*

I do not for one moment pretend that the road ahead will easy, but I really believe in the sport of tennis and the people involved. This is not about one person transforming tennis. This is about all of us getting behind the sport and working towards growing the game we all love. I am not SA tennis, the board of directors at TSA is not SA tennis, the Provinces are not SA tennis, you are not SA tennis – rather **Together we are SA tennis.**

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