



## **Dia daoibh a chairde.**

As the president of Munster Tennis I would like to thank all the Clubs of Munster for their continued support throughout what was a very difficult year for everyone in Tennis.

I would like to thank our Munster Tennis staff, Tennis Ireland staff, my fellow Branch Council Officers and all the Branch council members for their efforts during the year again in what was a stressful environment much of the time. I would like to thank my fellow Munster Tennis Representative Tennis Ireland Board Director Clifford Carroll and our two Alternates Eddie Ronayne & Áine Dunne who again had to operate in challenging times. I would also like to thank the previous Tennis Ireland President Shane Cook who was in office in 2021 for his work in supporting the entire organisation throughout the year. I would also like to thank our previous CEO Richard Fahy who contributed significantly to tennis in his time with Tennis Ireland. Lastly I would like to thank all our volunteers who contribute in so many ways to our sport be it on Sub-committees or helping run events.

I was honoured to have the opportunity to attend many of the finals of several of the Munster Competitions in 2021. They were very good days.

Well done to all the players & teams who competed during the year, there was some great tennis. There were great examples on show of the quality of the Tennis in Munster and the sportsmanship of the players and of the popularity of the Munster League Team Competitions in particular.

A huge effort went in over the last year by Munster Branch to run events if possible. It wasn't easy but it was worth the effort to support our sport, clubs and players. We ran 4 national events in the second half of the year.

The idea is to provide as many options as we can to both clubs and players to allow as many teams and players to compete. We were delighted to see teams entered from some of the newly affiliated clubs. There was a strong entry overall in both the Summer Cups and the Winter Leagues. We took the decision to reform both competitions where we moved from 12 to 18 Sections in the Summer Cup and we also radically changed the format of the Winter League to break it into two phases run over a more compact period of time. Again we added in more sections bringing it up to 18 Competitions over 6 rating (Grading) levels. This resulted in the number of entries for the Winter League increasing from approximately 220 Teams in 2019 to 350 Teams in Winter 2021/2022. This means that the Munster Tennis Winter League is the largest Tennis League in Europe.

For many years Munster Tennis has run a regional league in the Cork region. I am pleased to announce that we are going to expand this to both the North West region and the South East region and details and entries for these events will go live in the morning.

We hope to have an announcement of other Munster Tennis Tournaments / initiatives too in the near future.

We also hope to move the next Munster Winter League over to using the WTN (World Tennis Number) in the autumn. This will allow for a much better system to track people's performance and will allow people to move up and down grades depending on their performance. There is too much on this topic to go into here but there is good information provided by Tennis Ireland online and also by the ITF. <https://www.worldtennisnumber.com>

We have had a great success with the Munster Schools Cups this spring, which are currently ongoing with 100 Teams despite some uncertainty early in the year due to the Covid Pandemic and we will endeavor to grow these competitions further into the future.

Furthermore we also intend to directly run more Junior Competitions such as Tour 100 or Tour 250 events and to help clubs to host them and to expand the opportunities for more juniors throughout the year. If there is a gap we will try to fill it. Expressions of interest for positions of Tournament Directors for these events are currently live.

The Munster Commercial Tennis Camps at Fota Island Resort commenced at the beginning of July last year, once things were opening up, and they went well. The focus is on fun and recreation but still with great instruction by Munster Tennis Coach Paul Fitzgerald and assistants. The Camps have been coordinated by our Commercial Manager Kevin Mullen and supported by our Administrator Triona Buckley.

The courts at Fota are very busy with both Tennis Hub Members and Fota Hotel guests booking courts from early to late. It is very important to our partners at Fota Island Resort to see all this activity and have the tennis activities organised and directed in a professional manner for their patrons.

Soon Tennis Ireland will be launching some very important initiatives and one of them is Clubspark. This should be a game changer particularly for smaller clubs. This is where Tennis Ireland will use the leverage of a large number of our clubs to attain a very competitive deal to help clubs promote and administer themselves with things like a website and booking systems included as standard. I have only touched on this subject here but expect to hear of significant further announcements in the coming months. We will be reaching out again to the smaller clubs in particular in relation to this. We already had a webinar with clubs interested in affiliating.

Munster Tennis continues to foster cooperation within the tennis world and also new relationships and we are making a big push to get the remaining clubs that are not affiliated to affiliate. To emphasise: *The most important consideration is that working together as a team we are stronger. It is important that all Tennis Clubs in Munster affiliate and contribute in their own small way to supporting our sport. Furthermore the more Clubs we represent the more supports we can get for those clubs – either ourselves and Tennis Ireland or through Government Agencies.*

To this end we will be making further contact with many more clubs over the summer.

The Tennis Ireland Development Team have been hard at work over the past few months. This team includes our Development officer Liz Clifford. They have been working on many important initiatives including a new Schools link program which links Clubs with Schools. It is an area that we as a tennis community don't have a strong record on with the exception of a few schools over the years. The Munster Branch Council have unanimously supported this programme. If anyone has an interest in this area please contact Liz.

In terms of Junior tennis and player development we have had much discussion over the year and we have decided to make some radical changes that we feel will make all the difference over the coming years.

The focus of the Branch has to be on development of the Game from the ground up and getting the numbers of juniors up in all areas. This will then feed into the Performance area in time.

We have to have more events and competitions for juniors of all abilities. We need more focus on Doubles / Mixed and also on social tennis for Teenagers.

From a structural point of view we have refocussed the existing Junior sub-committee away from performance and more towards tournaments. It is renamed the "Junior Development Committee (Activities)". Separate to this we are creating a new sub-Committee that will be called the Player Development Committee, which will include at least one coach from each of the 3 regions of Munster. Coaches have not always been valued enough or been part of the decision making in our organisation and the new group will help address that fact. Both of these groups will be full Sub-Committees in Munster Tennis and will report to the Branch Council

These groupings will work in tandem our Performance Development Officer Cian Blake who leads the Emerging Talent Programme in the Province. He also leads Provincial Performance Structural

Development. During 2021 Cian was honored with being appointed as Co-Captain of the Irish Davis Cup Team (with Carlos Miranda) where Ireland excelled and were ultimately promoted to World Group II. Well done again to Cian and Carlos.

The Terms of Reference for these two Branch Council sub-committees will be published shortly on our Website and it will give people a clear idea of what is involved. In the next few days we will be taking expressions of interest from people wanting to be part of these committees.

We as a result expect to have several new announcements in the area over the coming weeks.

Munster Tennis have made significant progress with developing Terms of Reference for all our main sub-committees in 2020 and 2021 and will be further clarifying roles within the Branch in 2022. These will all be published on our website in due course. It is mandatory to be Garda Vetted to be a member of Munster Branch Council and everyone has to sign up to the Confidentiality Policy and to the rules and requirements of the Tennis Ireland Volunteer hand book.

*It would be remiss of me not to mention the significant difficulties within Tennis Ireland at Board level in 2021. Progress on addressing some of those difficulties has been slow but with the help of Sport Ireland and our Interim CEO I am confident that significant progress can be made in the coming weeks and months. Significant reform is required as has been detailed on the two external reports that have been produced, but this reform if implemented in line with Sport Ireland advice will put the entire organisation on a firmer footing, one which will allow us confidently to develop our sport together, and within all 32 counties of this Island.*

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate all the players on the Munster Tennis Inter-Provincial Teams over 30 to over 45 who won the Inter-Provincial Championships in 2021. This was a significant achievement and there were great team and individual performances. I look forward to more success on the court for Munster Tennis players in 2022.

I would also like to congratulate all the Munster players who won national titles during the year and were selected for Irish Teams. I wish them all the best.

Lastly I will again thank all our clubs, without whose support we could not hope to develop tennis in the way we have and will do into the future. We have a strong plan for the year ahead; it is activity and development based and is fully budgeted for. We have planned and budgeted for a surplus in 2022, which will be reinvested into the sport.

*If we don't continuously promote our sport and get the message out about it and our tournaments we will fall behind other sports and activities.*

The Tennis community is a great community with a great social scene. Long may it continue.

Déanfaimid ár ndícheall. Is mise le meas



**Robert M. Cummins**

**Uachtarán Leadóige na Mumhan**

