



Peter Cameron

Tennyson a tennis Holy Grail

TENNIS tycoons had every reason to be sad when master bureaucrat Ross Rolfe departed from the Premier's Department yesterday.

Rolfe, a former board member of Tennis Queensland, is off to Sydney to beef up 'Queensland Inc' at investment firm Babcock and Brown.

Up to 20 applicants are courting the selection committee to replace Rolfe in the \$500,000-a-year director-general's chair.

Rolfe had two stints driving the Premier's Department and took every opportunity to slice egos and red tape.

He was rated the most effective co-ordinator since the Joh era when knighted mandarins Leo Hielscher and Sid Schubert ran the Cabinet and government agendas.

Meanwhile, work is progressing on schedule at TQ's new \$77 million centre in the riverside Brisbane suburb of Tennyson.

When the project is completed late next year, the Gold Coast can expect to lose its January women's championships.

But, say the insiders at Tennis Australia, this will be a small price to pay for an annual Wimbledon-style male and female tournament at Tennyson.

Suggestions that the 23-court complex at Tennyson would finish up \$17 million over budget was quickly smashed last night by Sports Minister Andrew Fraser.

Not only on time, but on budget and sticking to the original plan which will guarantee three Grand Slam surfaces in its 17 hardcourt, four clay and two grass arenas.

Only casualty was the plan to run a spur railway line into Tennyson from nearby Yeerongpilly station. Compromise for tennis fans using public transport will be an overpass.

Former treasurer Terry Mackenroth told the parliamentary estimates hearings in July, 2005, that Tennyson would become the new home for Tennis Queensland.

"Tennis in Queensland has been adversely affected by the absence of a principal development venue since the closure of the long-time home of Queensland Tennis, Frew Park at Milton, in 1999," he said.

Ironically for tennis fans who do not want to see the Royal Pines women's gala disappear to Brisbane, Frew Park was sold to a Gold Coast developer and racing identity.

But the centre court at Tennyson is expected to offer covered seating for 3500 fans in its 7000-seat configuration. The Queensland



Martina Hingis enjoys a lighter moment at the Australian Women's Hardcourts at Royal Pines. The Coast could wave goodbye to the tournament when a new facility is built in Brisbane.

Government, TA and TQ hope Tennyson soon will be hosting Davis and Fed Cup tournaments.

The livewire Queensland Events Corporation recently wrote a cheque for \$2 million-plus to TA to ensure continued promotion for top tennis in this state.

It remains to be seen if Rolfe can be enticed to rejoin the TQ board when he is based in the harbour city.

For years Rolfe lobbied back and forth between big business and the mahogany levels of the state bureaucracy. He served as chief executive at Stanwell Corporation when Elizabeth Nosworthy was chairman.

The widely respected Nosworthy is not only Water Commissioner these days, but also is deputy chairperson of Babcock and Brown.

Rolfe was widely regarded as a wizard in the infrastructure sector.

He not only served for TQ. His numerous other board seats included education, energy and resources organisations.

Rolfe also was appointed to the council of the Queensland University of Technology.

Somehow he found time to chair the Beach Protection Authority and bring his big business and government knowhow to the QEC board.

There was a conflict of interest flurry recently involving the Dalrymple Bay coal terminal - leased for 99 years to Babcock and Brown. It centred on bottleneck problems and possible compensation claims against Queensland Rail.

The Australian newspaper reported that Premier Peter Beattie defended Mr Rolfe's role as director-general in a review of the bottleneck drama.

It remains to be seen if Rolfe's muscle at Tennyson is acknowledged by the Government when time comes to cut the ribbon.

But TQ is not letting his Sydney move ruin their game. TQ's latest financial ace is expected to include a major new sponsor.

is laughed off on air. Laws' fine baritone delivered gravitas to occasions such as the dawn service at Gallipoli.

Driving around the Gold Coast or way up north it was seldom difficult to pick up Laws' morning program.

His finesse with talkback rednecks and political stooges will be impossible to replace for those of us who believe radio does not have to be dumbed down.

One very hot potato

PREMIER Pete will find himself in the local government spotlight when the annual state Labor conference kicks off in Brisbane today.

To put it mildly, federal Labor candidates are finding Premier Pete's council amalgamation plans the number one issue in recent weeks.

One prominent Labor candidate on Brisbane's northside was startled one night recently to find the local government controversy dominating the microphone at a school function.

Whether dismayed Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd wants to take it further in public when he addresses the conference this morning remains to be seen.

Mr Rudd may have enough on his plate fending off the old Trades Hall push angry at his union conservatism.

The conference was traditionally held on the June long weekend, but the Labor boys and girls take their entitlements seriously during the Work Choices debate and are not prepared to forsake a long weekend any more.

Treasury boffins in Brisbane may be the key to resolving the local government controversy.

Word from George Street is that they are not keen to spend months working out assets and compensation fine print which would accompany changes to council boundaries.

They want the Premier and his council review commission to stick to current boundaries if amalgamations proceed. This worked when Gold Coast merged with Albert Shire and when Ipswich merged with West Moreton Shire.

Names of the new councils are the problem. It was previously suggested that a Caboolture, Pine Rivers and Redcliffe amalgamation could be called Crap. Apparently if Logan and Redlands merge the new council may be called Boganland. Joining Gatton and Laidley would give us Spudpatch. The Beaudesert-Boonah union would become Boondoggle. And with all the dams in the near northwest, a merged Esk-Kilcoy shire would be known as Underwater World.

Radio loses a superstar


JOHN Laws probably stayed too long in broadcasting. He was too articulate, intelligent and skilful in a medium dominated by nitwits and mediocrity.

His professionalism made him look like a dinosaur against those whose ignorance about diction and pronunciation is regarded as clever or funny.

Laws was so good he defied his seven decades and a cash-for-comment scandal.

He brought common sense to radio without resorting to false indignation.

Even the ABC was not in Laws' class. Obsessed with water supplies in Queensland dams, ABC mainstream often sinks to levels where lack of erudition or research



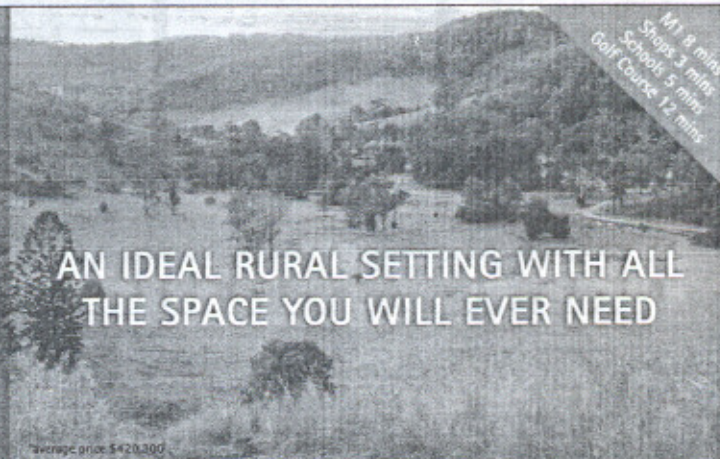
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