



LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION SCORE AN ACE



The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the national governing body of tennis in Great Britain, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Its objectives are to promote and develop tennis and to advance and safeguard the interests of the sport. Founded in 1888, it is now headquartered at the new National Tennis Centre in Roehampton (South West London) having moved from its previous location at The Queen's Club.

The LTA has a turnover in excess of £40 million and currently has 450 employees and more than 215,000 individual members across the UK, as well as hundreds of volunteers who work for the Association periodically.

In recent years, disaster recovery and business continuity have become priority issues for many companies. The Lawn Tennis Association is no exception and ensuring business continuity is considered a strategic imperative by its leadership team.

David Penton, IT Support Manager for the LTA explains, "Almost everything in business today is driven by data and technology. Loss of data, even for a short period, could prevent our employees and volunteers from working properly. Our 215,000 members could also be directly affected as their exclusive area of our website would not be able to display the latest updates, such as player ratings and information on events and competitions."

Its focus on providing outstanding customer service to tennis stakeholders meant that the LTA was keen to ensure that it had an effective solution that would protect its data and ensure business continuity to all its users.

Similarly, increasing awareness of the environmental impact of IT led the LTA to move to a virtual server infrastructure using VMware virtualisation technology in order to reduce its server count and carbon footprint, while safeguarding efficiency and service levels.

The LTA was aware that their current solution didn't regularly back up all files and data, therefore it could prove difficult to retrieve certain information quickly if required. With half of its employees and volunteers regularly working remotely, with the remainder based either at the HQ or at one of fifty county offices, the LTA needed a solution that would not only meet its current and future storage requirements but that also offered an effective disaster recovery capability for its distributed and virtualised IT infrastructure. The LTA approached their incumbent supplier for IT, Softcat, who had previously worked on a number of technology solutions around securing their network and advised on their route and supply of software licensing, to advise and assist with the design and implementation of a new storage and disaster recovery solution.

"We have developed a strong relationship with Softcat over several years and have always been impressed by the expertise and professionalism of its people and the value for money of its offerings," comments David. "We knew we could rely on our Softcat team to help us define and implement a solution that would meet our performance needs and remain cost-effective."

One of Softcat's storage specialists spent time with the LTA to review their business objectives and specific needs, following which a storage consolidation and centralisation solution was recommended based on NetApp's FAS technology. NetApp FAS was recommended primarily because of its simplicity when delivering a disaster recovery solution to widely dispersed locations or departments in a cost effective manner.

In house expertise

As part of the decision process, Softcat provided performance benchmarking and cost comparisons, as David explains:

"Softcat assisted us with our technical and financial evaluation to ensure that the solution not only offered the required performance levels both short and longer term based on our data growth predictions, but also represented good value for money."

Within three weeks from purchase order, the NetApp solution was installed and up-and-running, handling approximately 7 terabytes of data from 80 physical servers running as virtual machines. Microsoft SQL and Exchange data, information from the LTA's Siebel CRM system, and a wide range of user files are replicated hourly from live servers running continuously.

In addition, SQL and Exchange verification takes place to ensure consistency of information across all locations. The stored data is also replicated to disaster recovery equipment located off-site at the All England Tennis Club at Wimbledon.

"The fact that our data is replicated every hour and that the NetApp solution enables us to retrieve files from a particular point in time means that we can either recover the latest version of a file or a previous version of it if this is required," comments David.

Put to the test

The LTA has already experienced the benefits of its new storage and disaster recovery solution when a business critical file was unintentionally deleted from a server. IT support was able to retrieve within minutes the exact file with all the latest data intact.

"Previously, we would have had to recover a tape and spent several hours to retrieve the relevant file from the previous day, which could have meant the loss of several hours of work not to mention the IT support time involved."

"With the NetApp solution we had restored the very latest file within minutes – the time and productivity savings were all the more welcome since the call came in on a Saturday morning!"

Not only have Softcat and the NetApp solution reduced risks for the LTA, but productivity is optimised through the ability to quickly recover recent files and data.

This will prove to be essential as the LTA migrate to a new version of its Siebel CRM system and consolidates its e-mail servers and introduce e-mail archiving.

"The NetApp solution not only enables us to quickly recover data requested from any location, but it also ensures that we have a fail-safe means of ensuring business continuity in the event of a major incident," David confirms.

Furthermore, the LTA is now easily able to increase storage volume, offering the business greater flexibility and the ability to grow while containing costs. This has also helped the LTA to further improve service to stakeholders by hosting databases for some of its member organisations.

"Softcat's knowledge of our business and understanding of our existing infrastructure was invaluable in ensuring that the NetApp solution met our needs and their close relationship with NetApp ensured that the implementation was swift and successful," concludes David.