Tennis Australia is the governing body for tennis in Australia, which facilitates player development, stages local and international events and invests in tennis facilities around Australia. The organisation promotes and assists with participation in tennis at all levels, and also conducts national and international tournaments. The most widely recognised of these include Davis Cup, Fed Cup, the Australian Open and Emirates Australian Open Series, as well as the Australian Pro Tour.

The largest event for Tennis Australia each year is the Australian Open, which is one of the Grand Slam® tennis events around the world and is held in Melbourne every January. Attracting the best players from around the world, the tournament runs for two weeks and in 2015 a record 703,899 fans flocked through the gates. It broadcast 15,000 hours of footage to 300 million viewers in 200 countries.

In the lead-up to Australian Open 2015, Samir Mahir, Chief Information Officer at Tennis Australia made the decision to upgrade to Aruba’s 802.11ac solution, seeing clear benefits in embracing the latest, highest performing Wi-Fi standard available.

“The Aruba Networks Wi-Fi solution is the conduit for delivering high-speed access to compelling content onsite. The Wi-Fi network needed to be securely managed and stable enough to handle 65,000 people connecting to the network every single day – that’s a big ask.”

Samir Mahir,
Chief Information Officer at Tennis Australia.

“Each year, we see more fans, players and coaches bringing smart phones and tablets into our venues. They want to track live scores, follow matches on other courts, watch video replays, review player statistics, look at player photos and engage on social media. The Aruba Networks Wi-Fi solution is the conduit for delivering high-speed access to compelling content onsite. The Wi-Fi network needed to be securely managed and stable enough to handle 65,000 people connecting to the network every single day – that’s a big ask,” Mahir continued.
SCALING UP FOR THE MAIN EVENT

At Australian Open 2014, there was approximately a 600 per cent increase in traffic handled by the wireless infrastructure across a two-week period. Similarly, Australian Open 2015 drew a three-fold increase in connectivity compared to 2014. Fortunately, Mahir’s team and Aruba Networks had deployed 802.11ac access points across the entirety of Melbourne Park. This ensured the delivery of consistent access to real-time multimedia streaming, mobile apps and information to the fingertips of all involved in the Grand Slam® tournament.

“We operate as a lean team for most of the year, but when it comes to the Australian Open, there is a need for us to bolster this to support the infrastructure. Thanks to support from Aruba, we scaled up our 24-person technology team to 170 for Australian Open 2015. It is fantastic to have Aruba Engineers sitting side-by-side with my team to ensure it all runs smoothly and offer a wide range of solutions that complement our team,” Mahir said.

At the core of Australian Open’s wireless network is the Aruba ClearPass Access Management solution, allowing simple and secure guest Wi-Fi access, ensuring seamless connectivity with real-time monitoring capabilities available to the technology team.

“We use ClearPass as our single platform to track all mobile devices and users, and give them the proper access privileges. It’s one of the best products we have seen in the market because it gives us the security to manage access, but also the flexibility to roll out policies across the platform,” Mahir said.

“One key differentiator for Aruba is that they not only provide the hardware solution that allows us to connect, but they also provide the software solution that allows us to manage the infrastructure. It’s this robust approach to networking that sets Aruba apart,” Mahir continued.

A WI-FI GRAND SLAM

Catering for a broad range of stakeholders required a smart solution that tailors access to different groups. According to Mahir, the 700 players at Australian Open 2015 relied on wireless to maintain communication with their home country and stay informed throughout the tournament.

“The players use Wi-Fi for many applications. Importantly, they want to be connected to email and browse the Internet whenever they want. They also need to be on top of their schedule of play – this is critical and they need access to this at all times,” Mahir said.

Additionally, more than 1,000 media representatives covered Australian Open 2015. And in addition to offering access to dedicated groups, Mahir also sees guest access as a critical element.

“Most photographers use cameras with digital capabilities and in-built Wi-Fi technology, and they want to take a photo and send it direct to their server. We provide Wi-Fi by the photo pit so they can capture a photo and have it to their team within 30 seconds,” Mahir said.

“Simple and secure guest access is important because you want to allow access to users that may not be part of any
particular category, like players or media, without involving IT. With the Aruba Networks solution, visitors and guests that come to Melbourne Park can also connect to the Wi-Fi and enjoy the event."

The Australian Open Wi-Fi infrastructure handled 52 terabytes of data traffic within the precinct in 2015, not including mobile data traffic. This figure is approximately two and a half times greater than in 2014, which was six times greater than in 2013. Additionally, the total Internet traffic handled by the entire network in 2015 was 23 terabytes, with seven terabytes handled through the wireless infrastructure. Other key statistics include:

- 77,000 smart devices connected to the network in total
- More than 60 per cent of devices were Apple iOS devices (iPhone and iPad) with Android at 19.2 per cent
- The top three destinations included Facebook, Amazon Cloud Drive and Tennis Australia Local
- On the opening day of Australian Open 2015, 45 per cent of users accessed the tournament’s provided Wi-Fi via Facebook logins and 55 per cent accessed via email logins.

As the usage peaked throughout the tournament, Mahir was impressed with the stability and performance of the Aruba Networks solution.

“At Australian Open 2015, I am pleased to report the Aruba Networks solution performed smoothly throughout the entire event and successfully managed the level of demand from players, coaches, fans, media, staff and guests. An independent speed test at one of the arenas revealed a 61mbps download speed and 48mbps upload speed, both remarkable top speeds capable of delivering high-res video on the go,” Mahir said.

“The process in the lead-up to and during the Australian Open gets better every year - that’s the beauty of working with a trusted partner like Aruba. Like any doubles partnership, you have to prepare, you have to train. And that’s how I see our partnership with Aruba, you have to get ready for the big event.”

“Wi-Fi is going to play a bigger role in connected stadiums because it is the main conduit to the content – be that digital signage or content used by the fans. Public facing Wi-Fi is no longer a luxury, demand from spectators means it is now a necessity. Moving forward, you will see the deployment of high-density wireless technology across more venues, and this is where Aruba truly excels,” Mahir continued.

ABOUT ARUBA NETWORKS

Aruba Networks is a leading provider of next-generation network access solutions for the mobile enterprise. The company designs and delivers Mobility-Defined Networks that empower IT departments and #GenMobile, a new generation of tech-savvy users who rely on their mobile devices for every aspect of work and personal communication. To create a mobility experience that #GenMobile and IT can rely upon, Aruba Mobility-Defined Networks™ automate infrastructure-wide performance optimization and trigger security actions that used to require manual IT intervention. The results are dramatically improved productivity and lower operational costs.