

# Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

Tuesday, January 16, 2024

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## Delayed start proves no obstacle for favourites

Heavy rain, primarily in New Plymouth, meant a delayed start to the 119th Midlands Funds Management Taranaki men's Open fours yesterday.

Because of this, only one game, still of the full 25 ends, was attempted and completed. "Based off what the forecasters were telling us, still as of Monday morning, we accept the one completed round happily," Bowls Taranaki Chairman Robert Wolfe said.

All the greens had been inspected and were pronounced clear for play at 7am, but an hour later it was different, with all the greens in the city either partly or fully submerged in water. While things were relatively clear at that stage at Lepperton, Inglewood and Oakura, the tournament committee resolved to delay play with the prospect of a 12.30pm start.

As the weather lifted, it was determined to play just one game. "Basically, we had two options — either one of 25 ends, which the players love, or to try and squeeze two games of 18 ends into the day," Wolfe said.

"At that time the information we had from some clubs was that the earliest starting time was likely to be 1pm, and so we decided that the one-game option was the way to go."

The programme will still proceed as planned, with round one games played yesterday. Today will see round two and three games contested, rounds four and five will be played on Wednesday, before the scheduled sixth and seventh matches on Thursday.

The eighth round will not be played, meaning the new qualification criteria has become five wins out of seven.

"Yes, we will end up with a few more qualifiers, but our maths suggests — providing no more time is lost — that the number that make it through to post section will not exceed the magical 64 mark."

On that basis, the final will still be played on Sunday afternoon as scheduled.

As expected, on the greens the majority of the favoured sides bolted away to comprehensive victories.

These teams included three teams skipped by past world champions — Peter Belliss (Aramoho), Gary Lawson (Elmwood Park) and Blake Signal, who is skipping a side entered under the name of Raymond Martin (Victoria). Martin is playing third.

Belliss, who this year celebrates the 40th anniversary of that famous last-bowl world singles triumph over Willie Wood, scored the biggest win of the day. His strong Whanganui team beat the 1985 Taranaki champion-of-champions singles runner-up, Peter Berge (Waitara), 41-8.

Lawson was also convincing, winning 36-17 over Desmond Pirere (Aramoho).

Signal's side raced to an early 17-3 lead, through eight ends, against the 2021 Auckland open triples winner Phil Taylor (Bridge Park). The Wellingtonians then cruised home 30-12.

Other teams to post big wins in the opening round included Bruce Currie (Mt Maunganui), Craig De Faria (West End), Martin Hitchings (Orewa), Robin Pierce (Katikati), Keith Sargent (Fitzroy), Ray Park (Wanganui), Grant Pease (Fitzroy), George Markie (Vogeltown), Neville Clark (Carlton Cornwall) and Wayne Parker (Bay View).

First-time supervisor Gerry O'Sullivan (Inglewood) showed no signs of the extra burden restricting his family team, as they posted a resounding 37-10 win.



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## Hill rolls back the years in opening win

Former New Zealand representative Neville Hill, pictured right, rolled back the years yesterday when he skipped his talented Onehunga & Districts side to an impressive 27-19 win on the Paritutu front green.

Hill, now with 60 years experience in the game and distinctions galore, was in good touch as his side to victory over one of Taranaki's most decorated players, Darren Goodin (Paritutu).

In a game that lasted just 23 ends, Hill's side won 16 of the heads, illustrating their domination. While Hill was philosophical — nothing new there, especially as the week progresses — his side has enough ability to challenge every side in the field.

It contains his grandson, Liam, the experienced Mike Bradshaw and another rising star, David Motu.

Goodin wasn't the only Taranaki rep to suffer defeat on the opening day, with Maurice Symes' objective of repeating his win from 35 years ago also suffering a set back. His Fitzroy quartet went down 26-17 to a useful Pukekohe side skipped by Frankie Lim that continued on its winning ways from Sunday.

In the battle of two of the most loyal visiting skips, Roger Sutton (Carlton Cornwall) got home 27-20 over Cary Pinker (Wanganui East).

Evan Thomas (Birkenhead) also went down, falling 26-18 to Mark Nicholl (Putaruru). But fellow North Harbour team Nigel Drew (Birkenhead) got the win. However, they were made to work hard before prevailing 28-24 over Mark Dudley (Hawera Park).

There were plenty of tense finishes, with two teams winning on their skips last bowl — pressure stuff indeed.

Kapiti gold star holder Ray Hudson (Otaki) led Mike Mail (Omokoroa) 24-19 playing the last end. However, when Hudson stepped onto the mat with his last bowl, he was six down. He calmly drew second shot to win.

It was the opposite outcome for the other Omokoroa side in the event, skipped by Cliff Webber.



Playing a Bulls team skipped by Trevor Belk, Webber led 14-7 after 14 ends. However, Belk's side turned things around to hit the front 18-15 after 20 ends. Things then got tight, with the scores 19-all playing the final end.

Bulls called the tune on the change-over, but Webber, a Bay of Plenty gold star holder, drew a beauty with his final bowl to snatch victory.

Dan Dickison (Tauranga) opened with a 26-18 win over Garry Petersen (Wanganui East) in a nip-and-tuck contest. No more than three points separated them for the first 22 ends. Dickison led 19-18 through 21 ends and finished it off with scores of 2-4-1.

Colin Boyle (Carlton Cornwall) also would have felt happy last night after a hard-fought 26-23 win over Peter Dorreen (Far North RSA). A five on the 20th end proved decisive.

Meanwhile Garry Muriwai (Martinborough) put the disappointment of losing the Wairarapa open triples final on Sunday behind him beating Bill Read (Paritutu) 29-10.

## Open stalwarts already missed

Shorty and Curly will both be missed.

That was the consensus of many of the bowlers, visitors and locals alike, in discovering the news of the recent deaths of two local bowling enthusiasts, workers for the game and Open stalwarts — Bryan “Shorty” Sanger and Graham “Curly” Johnson.

Both have been involved in the sport in Taranaki for over 40 years.

Sanger, who has bravely fought ill health for the past 14 years, died on January 3, while Johnson died on January 13, having enjoyed excellent health for all but the last six months of his 87 years.

Sanger was a true Paritutu icon.

For many years he was the prime chef at the popular Paritutu pre-Open barbeque. Always a willing worker behind the bar, when his playing days ended in 2016, he took on the bar manager's role with accuracy and enthusiasm.



He was renown for his many and varied stories — not always clean — although most people who encountered these left feeling the warmth of his welcome.

His association with Open was well pronounced as a player. As was recalled at his well-attended funeral last week, in the 78 editions of the Open since his birth, from the tens-of-thousands of players who have taken part, no-one has appeared in more finals during these years than he did.

He lost the first five of the these finals, before finally nailing it in 2015 as a member of Darren Goodin's victorious side.

That followed a successful liver transplant in 2011.

It was a great way for him to bow out of competition bowls.

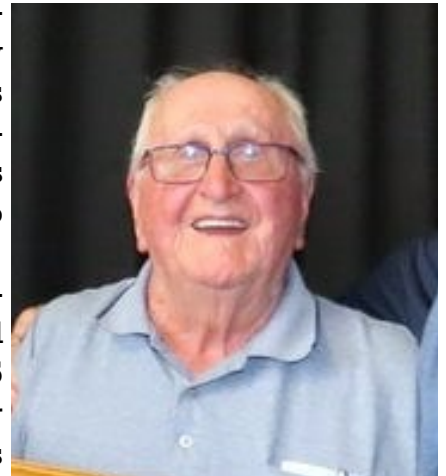
Sanger won the inaugural New Zealand interclub title in 1991, eight Taranaki titles and one in Whanganui, and was runner-up in the Dominion fours in 1993.

He was a regular Taranaki rep and a Life Member at Paritutu.

A condolence book and suitable memorial has been set up just inside the front doors at Paritutu, where visitors are encouraged to leave memories.

Johnson, another fine, friendly fellow, was equally emphatic in his contribution to the Open.

He, like Sanger, competed in more than 25 Opens, and for many years went above



and beyond by volunteering as both a supervisor and an umpire for a number of years.

Those in his section loved his care and attention, these being among the adjectives used to describe him around the greens yesterday.

He was an excellent event organiser for decades, with many marquee competitions, such as the West End professional tournament, benefitting from his expertise, dedication and kindness.

A former Taranaki junior rep, Johnson immersed himself in the West End club, serving as President and becoming a deserved Life Member.

Johnson successfully selected and managed the West End side that claimed the New Zealand men's interclub title in 2000.

Johnson's funeral will take place at the Taranaki Crematorium this Friday at 2pm.

May these two great gentlemen rest in peace.

## 75 years ago: Ted's team triumphs

Play in 1949, involving 164 North Island sides and two from the Mainland, commenced on heavy greens owing to rain — sound familiar? — but these sped up as the week went on.

Seven New Plymouth clubs — Paritutu, West End, New Plymouth, Fitzroy, Vogeltown, East End and the Fire Brigade (located just through the now Courtenay-Liardet intersection on the sea-side of the road) — plus Waitara's Clifton Park hosted the matches.

"Pete" Skoglund arrived for play on day three, having been preoccupied winning the Dominion fours on the preceding days.

A total of 46 sides scored the necessary six wins from the eight qualifying games to advance to post section, which continued to be held under the two-life system.

Noted Wellington player Ted Gee successfully skipped his side through the competition unbeaten. His side comprised Robert Shearer, Arthur Webster — who was to go on and represent New Zealand at the 1954 Empire Games — and Herb Brighting.

They edged the Paritutu side of Joseph Birch, Touchy Jordan, Leonard Hancock and Rug Hawkins 23-222 after an extra end in the decider.

The final was close throughout, but Gee led by three playing the last end.

There, Hawkins held four at once stage. This had been reduced to three — effectively making it a draw — on the skip change-over. Gee removed one counter; Hawkins drew another shot; Gee again removed another counter; before Hawkins drew the third shot with his last bowl.

Gee held the shot on the extra end and two runners from Hawkins missed by inches.

The pairs was won by Featherston's John Hyland and George Fuge. They beat Vogeltown's Jack Bennett — father of 1996 fours winner David — and Francis Whiting 22-12 in the final.



## Match of the morning

Two of the more comfortable opening round winners, Peter Belliss (Aramoho) and Paul Darbyshire (West End), meet this morning in what could be a good spectator game at Oakura. As noted on page one, Belliss posted the biggest win off the day, while Darbyshire, who has impressed since he arrived back in his native Taranaki from Manawatu, opened with a 26-14 victory over Mike Harvey (Raumati).

Belliss presents a strong side, with Ray Wilson and NZ gold star holder Lance Tasker up front, and 1986 Commonwealth Games representative Keith Slight at No 3.

Dennis Osborne, part of the last Taranaki side to win the NZ intercentre in 2015, leads, with the Murfitt brothers, Lindsay and Garry, bringing the energy in the middle of the team.

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