

Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

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Increase in numbers pleasing to see

The 88 sides which compete in The Devon Hotel Taranaki women's Open fours competition is the highest number of entries in the event for 20 years.

It's a response that thrills Bowls Taranaki chairman Robert Wolfe.

"We are very excited with what is about to unfold. With the Nationals being held here next month, we had anticipated a reduction in numbers, as we had for the men's event (from 182 down to 166 teams), but that opposite has happened with the women's Open," Wolfe said. Last year, 82 teams were involved.

The increase is seen as a tick of approval for everything associated with the Open — the greens, the format, the hospitality and so on. The extremely hot weather from the last week — four days the temperature exceeded 27 degrees — is expected to subside a little this week. That should please players and especially greenkeepers, with some greens experiencing burn-off during the men's Open.

Spread over the seven sections is a fair amount of talent. If the six sectional games are completed — there are some negative weather warnings for today — then there is likely to be some quality sides who miss qualification.

Section 1, playing at Paritutu A, Oakura and New Plymouth, is highlighted by current Black Jack Leeane Poulson (Papakura), who won the Dominion singles earlier in the month.

The first ever Australian side in the field will be skipped by Sue Brady (Pine Rivers, Brisbane). Brady is an accomplished player. She caused a real stir in making the last four of the Australian Open singles in 2017 and won the over 60 pairs at the same event in 2021.

In addition, Sue Hodges (Omokoroa) has won centre titles galore in Dunedin and Bay of Plenty, while the likes of Gwen Dwane (Tokoroa) and Teo Thorsensen (Paekakariki) should not be underestimated.

Of the locals, Elaine Hodge (New Plymouth), last season's semifinalists Cheryll Sharrock (Paritutu) and Rhonda Adams (Fitzroy) will give their opponents a good examination.

Section 2, playing at Paritutu B, Inglewood and Fitzroy, has veteran Diane Strawbridge (Kensington) — still a mean competitor as illustrated by her national club fours win last July.

Anne Searancke (Paraparaumu Beach), Jenny Menhennett (Bay View) and Taranaki gold star holder Cindy Nicoll (Inglewood) should all feature.

Section 3 has drawn West End 2, New Plymouth and Inglewood. Briar Atkinson (Paritutu) is a rising star in the game in this country. She was runner-up in the pairs and third-equal in the singles at the recent Dominion tournament, and presents a useful side for this event. Pam Mulford (Plimmerton), Leanne Stewart (Hikurangi) and 2012 Dominion fours winner and current New Zealand High Performance Lead Gayle Melrose (Papakura) are other capable sides in the group.

Section 4 plays at West End 3, Fitzroy and Waitara. It appears the most wide-open group.

It contains Lesley McLinden (Bridge Park), Robyn Wallace (Omarunui) and Irene Poletti (Levin).

2010 winner Gloria Shaw skips a handy Paritutu team, too.



Section 5 will be on display at Fitzroy, Waitara and West End 2. Hetty Bolscher (Pukekohe) impressed greatly as a member of Marg Davies' 2020 winning team.

Expect competition from Marilyn Constantine (Tauranga), last year's runners-up Rima Strickland (Royal Oak) and Dale Rowe (Featherston). Val Symes (Fitzroy) and Trish Howard (West End) are capable of progressing through the tournament.

Section 6, playing at Lepperton, Paritutu A and West End 3, includes current NZ club triples winner Kaye Bunn (Thames Coast), past NZ rep Cathy Andrews (Paritutu) and Kristin Stampa (Hawera Park). Debbie Wildermoth (Laird Park) knows what it takes to make the money rounds.

Section 7, at New Plymouth, Paritutu B and Oakura, should be a very competitive section. Anne Lomas (Hunua), with those two fabulous world titles to her credit, is in the group, as is Denise Te Momo (Pirongia).

Te Momo was highly impressive in skipping her side of Judy Marr, Lynda Bennett and Katrina Ensor to the title 12 months ago.

In addition, keep an eye out for Pauline Davy (Opunake) and Gale Fache (Paritutu).

* Paritutu's popular dinner and entertainment is back on again this year.

However, instead of being held on Wednesday night, it will take place on Thursday from 6pm.

Registration numbers should be lodged with the Paritutu club or section supervisors.

New pairs trophy to recognise legend Cole

Black Jack number 20, Margaret Cole, will be remembered for years to come after a new trophy was added to the Bowls Taranaki list recently. The Open fours-pairs event, which commences on Friday for non-qualifiers and non-participants in the fours, will from now on play for the Margaret Cole Trophy.

Cole is a Taranaki bowls legend and the Taranaki Board believed that it was appropriate to recognise her with a trophy in her honour.

Cole's representation for her country included the 1985 Bicentenary event in Australia and the 1988 World Bowls, held in Auckland.

Cole, right, is pictured with the great Pearl Dymond following their return from the Australian event, where they won silver in the triples together.

She was also part of the Taranaki side that won the NZ intercentre title in 1987.

Cole has amassed 19 Taranaki titles, the first being the champion-of-champions junior singles away back in 1973 from her native Lepperton.

For more than 20 years now Cole has played for Paritutu, although only sparingly these days.

The Taranaki Board believed that Cole was an ideal role-model for any bowler, with an excellent technique and attitude, and was able

to overcome disappointments and be an elite performer. She was also the perfect face for the new generation of bowlers that emerged in the province during the early 1980s.

A two-time winner of the Open fours, Cole will present the trophy for a first time this Sunday.

Last year's winners were Havelock North's Lynda Francis and Shirley Passey.

