

Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

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Thames Coast and Omokoroa to contest final

Two highly talented teams will contest the final of the 72nd Devon Hotel Taranaki women's Open fours at Paritutu this morning.

Kaye Bunn (Thames Coast) and Sue Hodges (Omokoroa) should head into the final with confidence after their sides, both well balanced units, advanced through contrasting semifinals yesterday. As the rains came in the morning, and the greens began to hold water, organisers resolved to transfer play all day to Paritutu's TSB Indoor Complex.

In the semifinals, Bunn's team scored a two on the last end to pip Rima Strickland (Royal Oak) 21-20, while Hodges crew dominated from the outset in their 26-9 win over Denise Te Momo (Pirongia).

Both sides appear evenly matched. The skips in their own rights, and based off the stuff that they have exhibited to date, are among the best in the country. The thirds are both highly successful, wily and in good touch. While the fronts of both teams have been doing their jobs admirably, despite their relatively short time in the game.

Bunn has 10 Thames Valley titles, including three already this season, while her biggest victory came in the NZ champion-of-champions triples last July when her side, which also contained No 3 Val Mathews, came from near-certain defeat to claim the title.

Bunn's side called on that same grit, and skill, to find a way across the line in the semifinals.

The ageless Mathews remains a superb competitor. While it would take some doing for her to surpass her 1996 achievement, when she skipped the winning Dominion fours side from her native Putaruru, she illustrated yesterday that the adrenaline still runs.

Mathews, who also won five intercentre titles to earn a NZ silver star, holds 16 centre certificates in Waikato and 34 in Thames Valley.

They were well-supported by their front two, Molly Galloway and Debra Gainfort, who re-

spectively hold two and four titles in the Valley.

Hodges and her No 3, Ruth Lynch, have both amassed impressive records in bowls.

Hodges holds 18 Dunedin and 15 Bay of Plenty titles, plus she has previously won the NZ intercentre, interclub and champion-of-champions fours events.

Hodges labelled herself the "ring-in" into this year's side. Lynch skipped the front two of her daughter, Rachele Morrison, and Karen Pickering in last year's Open, where they missed qualification by one game.

Lynch is highly proficient, and a perfect foil for the talented Hodges and the front two, who are both just second-year players but with big futures in bowls.

Lynch's biggest moment in the sport was playing No 3 in the winning Dominion fours side in 2012. In addition, she accumulated 27 North Harbour titles, prior to her arrival in Omokoroa 18 months ago. Lynch is also a two-time past Open winner, having led in sides that were successfully skipped by Shona Chambers to the title in 2004 and 2009.

A six on the third end propelled Hodges to a 10-0 lead in her semi against Te Momo. By the 12th end that had become 19-3 and it was apparent that Te Momo's golden run was coming to an end. Her side of Lynda Bennett, Judy Marr and Katrina Ensor attempted to turn it around, bringing it back to 20-8. But the big numbers that the Waikato girls needed were nowhere to be seen, the match being called off after 22 ends.



The second semifinal between Strickland and Bunn was a rip-snorter. Strickland led from the first end and never relinquished that until the conclusion of the 25th and final end. It was a cruel defeat in many ways for Strickland's side of Nicole Singer, Lee Singer and Robyn Fisher, especially after they had lost last year's final by one point.

Strickland got away to a handy 13-4 lead after nine ends. But then the fighting qualities of the Thames Valley side began to show. They narrowed the score to 15-12 after 15. Every time Royal Oak took a mini break, Thames Coast would dig in deeper. After 23 ends, Strickland led 20-17. Bunn took two on the 24th to make it one the difference playing the last end.

On the last, Bunn held one early and Mathews expertly added another. Fisher connected with the head but had no luck. The count was still two. Strickland's first was right in the slot, removing one. But Bunn brilliantly added a second. Strickland, probing, was fractionally wide of the bowl, leaving Bunn with the game. Te Momo's match with Chris Telford (Hastings) was the closest of the quarterfinals. The 2023 winners got through 19-17, after Telford's last bowl just failed to draw the shot. Te Momo held one shot on the head and a one-point lead on the board.

Fours and pairs results

Results of post section play in The Devon Hotel Taranaki women's Open fours:

Quarterfinals: Kaye Bunn, Val Mathews, Debra Gainfort, Molly Galloway (Thames Coast) 23 Val Symes, Maree Gadsby, Robyn Klenner, Lesley Te Awa (Fitzroy) 13; Rima Strickland, Robyn Fisher, Lee Singer, Nicole Singer (Royal Oak) 28 Hetty Bolscher, Sharon Perry, Val Bougen, Kathy Lister (Pukekohe) 15; Denise Te Momo, Katrina Ensor, Judy Marr, Lynda Bennett (Pirongia) 19 Chris Telford, Michelle Robinson, Raelene Cronin, Liz Fitch (Hastings) 17; Sue Hodges, Ruth Lynch, Rachelle Morrison, Karen Pickering (Omokoroa) 39 Heather Gilbert, Pat Andrews, Gloria Duffin, Deirdre Parkes (Tauranga South) 13. **Semifinals:** Bunn 21 Strickland 20, Hodges 26 Te Momo 9.

The final score of Strickland's 28-15 win over Hetty Bolscher (Pukekohe) didn't reflect the run of play in that match. Bolscher had taken a 15-12 lead into the 19th end.

Hodges shot away to a 12-0 lead after three ends against Heather Gilbert (Tauranga South). That was reduced to 14-8 after seven, but heavy scoring on the later ends, including a six and two fours, saw Hodges take the victory 39-13 after 18 ends.

Bunn played Val Symes (Fitzroy) on rink one in an entertaining clash that kept the large gallery interested.

A superb push shot from Bunn herself converted a one-down to a positive count of four on the 10th head. That gave the Thames Valley side the impetus, as they triumphed 23-13.

* The pairs final this morning will be between Sue Brady and Terry McAlary (Pine Rivers) and Irene Taunt and Alethea Rowlands (Tower). Brady and McAlary beat Barbara Hewitt and Joy Pedersen (Taradale) 28-5 in the semis. The Hawke's Bay pair, both juniors, had eliminated the 2022 and 2023 Taranaki Open pairs winners in the previous round.

Taunt and Rowlands, who were third-equal in the event last year, came from 6-3 down to beat Robyn Schischka and Dale Rowe (Featherston) 19-9 in the other semifinal.

The fours final will be livestreamed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohQYspzpa_M

Results of post section play in The Devon Hotel Taranaki women's Open fours-pairs:

Round 1: Trish Howard and Susan Cottam (West End) 15 Viv Hall and Denise Cottam (West End) 12; Sue Brady and Terry McAlary (Pine Rivers) 24 Emily Gray and Frances Burgess (Paekakariki) 4; Barbara Harvey and Val Keightey (Paritutu) 26 Fay Jones and Jen Brown (North End) 3. **Round 2:** Robyn Schischka and Dale Rowe (Featherston) 19 Teo Thorensen and Sammie Sweeney (Paekakariki) 16; Irene Taunt and Alethea Rowlands (Tower) 19 Jackie Morgan and Lyn Rae (Kia Toa) 16; Barbara Hewitt and Joy Pedersen (Taradale) 20 Howard 18; Brady 20 Harvey 15. **Round 3:** Taunt 19 Schischka 9; Brady 28 Hewitt 5.