

Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

Tuesday, January 27, 2026

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Clear skies on the horizon as 74th Open begins

Players and administrators alike will be hoping that The Devon Hotel Taranaki women's Open fours will enjoy better conditions than the men endured last week when the 74th edition commences today.

The forecast suggests that this is on the cards, too, after the men dealt with rain most days.

Regular participants will be used to the traditional format of the event, which has remained unchanged: two games of 25 ends per day, with four wins from the six section play matches required to qualify for post section.

The event continues to provide a mixture of fun, enjoyment, competition and sometimes relaxation. The main talk, of course, will be on the games and the field contains a number of very likely looking teams, especially the visitors.

Section 1: The feature of the section is the arrival of the Northend quartet skipped by Sharon Siegruhn. Siegruhn, a Southland Gold Star holder, and her side – which includes Glenice Paisley, who has 30 “pips” in that centre – are here for a holiday. But they are also here to win. Their qualifying path won't be easy, though. Among their opponents are dual World Champion Anne Lomas (Far North RSA), Waikato rep Tina Jakes, the 2020 winner Hetty Bolscher (Pukekohe) and Taranaki rep selector Chris Commane (Opunake).

Useful Hawke's Bay sides Ruth Spittle (Taradale) and Jackie Morgan (Kia Toa) round out the section.

Section 2: The tone for the week could be set for two sides in an interesting opening game this morning on Paritutu's front green, where Maree Gadsby (Fitzroy) plays Wendy Green (Ngongotaha). With Sue Hodges unavailable this year, Rachelle Morrison and Karen Pickering bring their own Omokoroa team. Still juniors, the pair have appeared in the last two Open finals. Bridget Fletcher takes over the skipping duties of a Paritutu side. Tia Moka

(Homai), a Counties rep, has experienced international bowls with Samoa, while Linda Fenton (Howick), is a titleholder in her home centre.

Section 3: Defending champion, Marilyn Constantine (Tauranga, pictured), has only Carolyn Tasker in her side this time. Replacing Mina Paul and Mary Campbell are Lynne Bodger and a

three-time Open winner, Ruth Lynch. Estelle

Hickey (Carlton Cornwall), after missing qualification last year, rates a chance.

She is an Auckland Gold Star holder, as are two other members of her side, Paula Kempthorne and Helen Blick. Pat Dixon (Naenae), who was edged

out so narrowly in the quarterfinals in 2025, is back. But like Constantine and Hickey, Dixon will have to work for the necessary four wins – with games against the most successful women's player in the history of the Wanganui centre, Dianne Patterson (Gonville-Castlecliff) and local hope, Rhonda Adams (Fitzroy).



Section 4: A second Southland side in the field is skipped by Marilyn Fletcher (Lumsden), a member of the wider senior rep squad in the south.

There is plenty of talent elsewhere, too.

Wendy Sarjeant brings a likely Mangawhai team, while few will have forgotten the titanic semifinal that Adele French (Thames Coast) was involved in last year.

After an absence of one year, Robyn Fisher (Royal Oak, pictured) returns. She was runner-up in 2023 and third-equal in 2024.

Section 5: Canterbury representative Tracy Fickling (Allenton) squares off with Eileen Jones (Paraparaumu Beach), who has two bars to her Gold Star in Kapiti, this morning at New Plymouth.



The home supporters will also get a look at Elaine Hodge, playing on her home green, and Trish Howard (West End). The two locals and Fickling will not only have to tangle with Jones, but also 2019 winner Karen de Jongh (Hinuera) and Gayle Melrose (Tauranga), the 2012 Dominion fours champion.

There will a reunion of sorts on Thursday morning when Fickling plays Melrose at West End. Melrose's side contains three members of the 2020 winning unit — Chryl Hunia, Les Eagleton and Marg Davies — while Fickling has Denise Taylor at No 2 in her team. Taylor was a member of the Wanganui quartet skipped by Pam Burgess that lost the final to Davies by one shot on a dramatic final end.

A change in the printed programme has been made in the section, where team five, Linda Stratford (Mercury Bay), has been replaced by a side compiled by the tournament committee. It comprises Robyn Schischka (Masterton) and local players Gloria Wolfe, Vicky Harman and Lynda Banks.

Section 6: Heather Johns (Paritutu), who is getting back to the form that saw her claim the

2013 Dominion fours, and the evergreen Diane Strawbridge (Kinsington, pictured) shape up as the teams to beat in the group.



Perhaps their toughest examination may come from Ngaire McKinley (Omarunui), Johns' first opponent today. This section was redrawn following the withdrawal of two teams on January 12.

Section 7: Chris Telford (Napier) has had an excellent season to date, claiming a cleansweep of club titles – no mean feat in a club the size of Napier.

Marlene Foster (Wanganui East) is competitive, so too Lynn Clifford (Mercury Bay), a semifinalist in 2025. There appears few, or none, easy pickings in the group, which also contains Pam Mulford (Plimmerton) and Cathy Andrews (Paritutu).

50 years ago

The 1976 tournament attracted 130 teams, with 33 from outside the province. Fifty-four sides posting the necessary four wins from six in section play.

The final, played at the Riverside club, which was located in Aubrey Street a stone's throw from New Plymouth's CBD, was contested between Northern (T Sterling, J Welch, R Galloway and V Burrows) and Stratford (J Clarke, F Martin, E Davies and P Dymond). Burrows led 25-20 playing the last end, with Dymond managing only four shots to lose by one.

The pairs, run for the second and last time as a consolation event until its reintroduction in 2022, had 82 entries. The final was an all-Hawera affair, with Mary Dymond (a sister-in-law to Pearl) and Margaret Ratahi edging out Molly Moncur and Julie Mitchell 15-14 in the final.

Paritutu dinner on Thursday night

Paritutu's popular Thursday night dinner is on again, with a warm invitation extended to all. Players are requested to register with Paritutu members.