

Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

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Twenty-eight sides unbeaten after opening day

Twenty-eight sides will have an extra spring in their step this morning after they navigated through the first day's play without defeat in the 74th Devon Hotel Taranaki women's Open fours yesterday.

After the two wins, those teams are halfway to qualifying, with four further rounds being played today and tomorrow. There were 26 teams that had one win and one loss, while the remaining 28 sides lost both games.

Inevitably most of the favoured sides won both.

Defending champion Marilyn Constantine, who has Ruth Lynch in her Tauranga side, was untroubled in both games. Lynch's daughter, Rachelle Morrison (Omokoroa), despite still being a junior, was impressive on the green and the scoreboard, as her side notched up two big wins as well.

But there were exceptions, with three of the most experienced skips in the Open all losing twice — Gayle Melrose (Tauranga), Anne Lomas (Far North RSA) and Karen de Jongh (Hinuera). However, they do not need to look too deep into the history books for inspiration. Liam Hill, runner-up in the men's Open on Sunday, also lost both matches on day one before commencing his winning run.

Lomas possesses one of the best attitudes in the sport and following yesterday's two defeats, still held herself with the poise of a double world champion. Her side lost 26-15 to Jackie Morgan (Kia Toa) and 21-20 to Vivienne Hall (West End). Lomas had led 19-7.

There was joy for Bowls Taranaki Patron, Patty Symes. Playing No 2 in a Tower side skipped by her daughter, Irene Taunt, the team recorded two handsome wins — 32-16 over 2020 champion Hetty Bolscher (Pukekohe) and 39-10 against Gail Burrows (Inglewood), which included an eight on one end.

Bolscher did recover well, though, beating Morgan 30-20 in the afternoon.

Ruth Spittle (Taradale) emerged as the only two-winner from the Hawke's Bay stable of 10 sides — but that included some anxious moments, especially in the morning round, with the team beating Tina Jakes (Tokoroa). Jakes had led 13-5 after nine ends, before Spittle returned the favour to lead 22-16 after 19. But the momentum kept moving. Jakes got in front 23-22 with two to play, before Spittle, with a two and a three, got the win 27-23. Both were comfortable victors in the afternoon.

Sharon Siegruhn's Northend (Invercargill) scored the biggest score of the day, 51-7 over Burrows, in a match that was played out to the full quota of 25 ends. But the Southlanders were undone 28-22 in round two by Lee McDonald's unbeaten Mercury Bay quartet. McDonald led 14-1 and 20-8, and while Siegruhn reduced the deficit, the margin was too great.

The other three south island sides all did the double — Marilyn Fletcher (Lumsden), Hazel Littlejohn (Darfield) and Tracy Fickling (Allenton), whose side was in fact skipped by Denise Taylor.

Fletcher's side did initially wonder what they had got themselves in for, failing to score on the first eight ends in the morning against four second-year players from the Bluff Hill club in Napier, skipped by Els Maas. It was 10-0 at that junction, but Fletcher turned it around to win 24-21 and that was even after dropping five shots on the last two ends. Despite their inexperience, the Maas side rebounded after lunch to win and will be a team to watch in time.



Wendy Green (Ngonotaha), who was runner-up in the Bay of Plenty fours last weekend, was another of the favoured teams to end with two wins. The morning game was secured 24-21 against Maree Gadsby (Fitzroy). Gadsby had led 17-10 after 16 ends. But Green dominated the match after that and led by two shots playing the last head.

Gadsby did at least salvage something from the day, coming from behind to beat Bridget Fletcher (Paritutu) 25-24 in round two.

There were noteworthy performances from two local teams skipped by Taranaki representatives, Rhonda Adams (Fitzroy) and Trish Howard (West End), both winning twice with relative comfort, even though the former was chased hard at the end by Denise Cottam (West End) in the afternoon.

Pam Mulford (Plimmerton) was one of the unlucky teams, dropping both games. The Wellington rep lost 21-20 on an extra end to Cindy Nicoll (Inglewood) in the morning, after an outstanding 25th end saw Nicoll score the two points required to put the game into overtime.

Mulford was then nosed out 27-24 by Lynn Clifford (Mercury Bay). Clifford had produced some excellent deliveries during her morning 21-18 hard-fought win over Fay Bird (Central Cambridge).

Marlene Foster (Wanganui East) returned the best net-differential of the day of plus-58 after two big wins. But another prominent team from the river city, Dianne Patterson (Gonville -Castlecliff), never got going and lost both.

In section six, which gave great comments of the Oakura green, Anne Mahon (Katikati) upset Paritutu's Heather Johns 23-19 in an even afternoon encounter. Mahon won twice, as did Kathy Dempster-Rivett (Whakatane) and the looming Diane Strawbridge (Kensington).

One of the less known names in Taranaki to also win twice with some class was Marlene Alberino-Kay (Island Bay). Alberino-Kay is a competitive player with three Wellington crowns, plus a couple of over-60s titles.

* For those wishing to purchase shirts, go to: <https://www.gamechanger.org.nz/product-page/taranaki-bowls-ladies-polo-shirt>

Summary after first day's play

Standings after day one in The Devon Hotel Taranaki women's Open fours yesterday:

Section 1: two wins, Lee McDonald (Mercury Bay), Ruth Spittle (Taradale), Irene Taunt (Tower); one win, Tina Jakes (Tokoroa), Chris Commene (Opunake), Hetty Bolscher (Pukekohe), Sharon Siegruhn (Northend), Viv Hall (West End), Jackie Morgan (Kia Toa).

Section 2: two wins, Ange Debique (Stratford-Avon), Wendy Green (Ngonotaha), Tia Moka (Homai), Rachelle Morrison (Omokoroa); one win, Maree Gadsby (Fitzroy), Sandy Booth (Petone), Janet Olliver (Waitarere Beach), Bridget Fletcher (Paritutu).

Section 3: two wins, Rhonda Adams (Fitzroy), Estelle Hickey (Carlton Cornwall), Marilyn Constantine (Tauranga), Linda Kape (Okato); one win, Judy Cato (Te Awamutu), Pat Dixon (Naenae), Tereska Knap (Miramar), Denise Cottam (West End).

Section 4: two wins, Barbara Harvey (Paritutu), Robyn Fisher (Royal Oak), Adele

French (Thames Coast), Marilyn Fletcher (Lumsden); one win, Val Symes (New Plymouth), Wendy Sarjeant (Mangawhai), Els Maas (Bluff Hill), Kristin Stampa (Stratford-Avon).

Section 5: two wins, Elaine Hodge (New Plymouth), Tracy Fickling (Allenton), Pania Roberts (Opononi), Trish Howard (West End), Marlene Alberino-Kay (Island Bay); one win, Barbara Hewitt (Taradale), Mihi Hona (Stratford-Avon).

Section 6: two wins, Kathy Dempster-Rivett (Whakatane), Diane Strawbridge (Kensington), Anne Mahon (Katikati); one win, Ngaire McKinley (Omarunui), Heather Johns (Paritutu), Janelle Duncie (Lepperton), Janice Ropitini (West End).

Section 7: two wins, Marlene Foster (Wanganui East), Cindy Nicoll (Inglewood), Lynn Clifford (Mercury Bay), Sheryl Wellington (Mairangi Bay), Hazel Littlejohn (Darfield); one win, Chris Telford (Napier), Cathy Andrews (Paritutu).