

Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

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Many strong visitors to challenge local hopes

Fifty-four teams will contest that Taranaki women's Open fours tournament when the 2018 edition commences at greens around New Plymouth this morning.

Of those, 20 sides are visiting from outside the province, with the other 34 from Taranaki. Teams will play two games of 25 ends each day, with section play scheduled to finish on Thursday evening. By that point, six rounds should have been completed, weather permitting, and those finishing with four or more wins will advance to post section on Friday.

Section one appears to be the strongest of the groups, with high-profile visitors Margaret Reed (Tauranga South), Reen Stratford (Aramoho) and Denise Samuel (Glenfield).

Stratford, the 2010 Dominion pairs winner, and the runner-up in the singles in both 2013 and 2017, has a useful looking side. Samuel also looks like having a solid team around her, including former NZ under 18 champion, Paris Baker. Stratford and Samuel are past teammates, having won a title together in Auckland. They have avoided each other — in section play at least.

Among the local teams in the section are Cindy Nichol, who's Inglewood side has had a good season to date, past NZ rep Cathy Andrews (Paritutu) and Val McEldowney (New Plymouth). Andrews opens her campaign against her sister, Janice Ropitni (West End). They are both past winners, Ropitni having led in the winning side in 1999, while Andrews was third in the victorious side the following year.

Section one will play at West End, Fitzroy and Paritutu.

Two-time champion Shona Chambers (Browns Bay) leads the most likely teams in **section two**, where a number of solid local teams exist. Chambers side of Ruth Lynch, Rona Turner and Carole Fredrick won the title in 2004 and 2009.

Kristin Stampa (Hawera Park) is also a past winner, while Taranaki reps Maree Gadsby (New Plymouth) and Gloria Shaw (Paritutu) skip new-look teams.

Chambers doesn't have an easy start with the wily Ellie Goble (Lepperton), a three-time winner, and Stampa today.

Section two plays at New Plymouth, West End and Fitzroy.

Denise Taylor (Wanganui), the former NZ cycling representative, impressed in making the final of the Dominion pairs last season in New Plymouth. She skips a strong side, with the other three members — Cynthia Adams, Pam Burgess and Dot Belliss — winners of the Dominion fours in 2015, in **section three**.

Taylor is joined by Sharon Siegruhn (Pukekohe), who heads a side which includes two members of last year's winning team.

Among the locals are gold star holders Rhonda Adams (Fitzroy) and Pauline Davy (Lepperton), along with Taranaki patron and the 2016 runner-up, Patty Symes (Tower).

Section three will play at Paritutu, New Plymouth and West End.

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Bev Robinson (Opunake), left, and Denise Taylor (Wanganui), right, are both expected to feature during the week.



WEATHER FORECAST

Tuesday



Wednesday



Thursday



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There is also a tough look to **section four**, with Wendy Green (Ngongotaha) and Bev Corbett (Hinuera), the former NZ rep who has won distinctions galore including the 1997 Dominion fours, meeting the likes of Gale Fache (Vogeltown) and Bev Robinson (Opunake).

Green, nee Clarke, grew up in Stratford and is the sister of the 1979 Taranaki champion-of-champions triples winner, Barry Clarke. Robinson has a similar side to the team that claimed the 2016 title and was runner-up in 2017, but with matches against both Corbett and Fache, plus some tidy other sides, qualification will not come easily.

Section four will play at Fitzroy, Paritutu and New Plymouth.

New champion this year

There will be a new winner of the Taranaki women's Open fours title in 2018, after last year's champion Natarsha Grimshaw decided, after initially entering, that she could in fact not fit the week-long competition into her busy schedule.

Grimshaw's Papakura side of Jan Larsen, Cheryl Hunia and Adrienne Tilyard won last year's final 21-9 over the Opunake side of Val Langton, Nell L'ami, Eileen Rothwell and Bev Robinson.

But while Grimshaw, along with Hunia, will bypass the tournament, Larsen and Tilyard have returned.

They are playing in a side that will be skipped by Pukekohe's Sharon Siegruhn, with Sheryl Nasey at No 2, in section three.



Changes to published programme

There have been few changes to the teams in the published programme.

In section two, Norma Gallagher's Mt Maunganui team has withdrawn. Its place has been taken by the Waitara side of Lynette Harte, Jean Keith, Joy Clouston and skip Liz Johnstone.

There has been a change at the helm of one of the Paritutu teams in section three, with the 2013 Dominion fours winner, Heather Johns, now skipping in place of Prue Wright. Johns skipped the winning team in this tournament in 2012.

Meanwhile, the Lepperton side in section one, originally entered under Gaelene Riddle, will now be skipped by Wendy Moratti after the former was forced to withdraw from the competition due to ill health.

Match of the morning — Reed v McEldowney

Rink 1 at West End this morning will involve two of the more favoured teams squaring off—Margaret Reed (Tauranga South) and Val McEldowney (New Plymouth).

Reed presents a powerful side, comprising Karen Clarke, Robyn Davis and Marilyn McLeod.

Reed, like McLeod, a dual member also of the Hinuera club in the Waikato, had a golden year in 2017 skipping her team in victory in the national club championship fours, as well as being a member of the Hinuera side that won the NZ interclub title. She has also previously won, with McLeod, the national club championship pairs.

Davis shared in last season's fours triumph, which was her third success in the "pathways" competition, and has also won the Auckland-based NZ open triples.

McLeod, has two national club championship titles, plus three titles from the Auckland-based NZ open.

McEldowney, a double gold star holder in Taranaki as well as having won the 2013 Dominion singles, has a new-look team with Eisie Morgan, Angela Robinson and former Taranaki rep Anne Brophy.