

# Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

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## “All set and ready to go” — Bennett

It is all systems go for the 114th Taranaki men's open fours when the event gets underway in New Plymouth and surrounding areas this morning, says Bowls Taranaki president, Brien Bennett QSM, pictured.

“Everything is in order. We are all set and ready to go,” said Bennett, who first played in the tournament in 1967 and has been involved in the running of the event since 1995, with the exception of one year.

“While some clubs have battled with the hot, humid conditions of the last few weeks, we are comfortable with the running quality of all surfaces at this time.”

Following the withdrawal of two teams last Monday from section 12 that group has been redrawn into 12 teams.

“While we are disappointed to lose two teams at this late stage, we are delighted with the overall response we have received.”

The 166 teams is 10 more than last year, with 96 visitors, an increase of 15 on 2018, and 70 Taranaki combinations, a reduction of five. Bowls faced many challenges in 2019, as does all traditional sports, Bennett said. “But



clearly there is still a good deal of demand for a tournament like this. Relative to full playing members, participation levels are as high as they have ever been in the Open.”

Bennett said there was no current desire from Bowls Taranaki to change the format of the event.

“However, suggestions and feedback are always welcome. Nothing can stay the same forever and no-one, including Bowls Taranaki, can be immune from criticism and improvements.”

## Leads and twos on the bank — please

At the commencement of the 114th Open tournament, Brien Bennett QSM has asked that all players take notice of a directive from the tournament committee: leads and seconds are asked to keep off the head and on the bank when the threes and skips are playing.

“We have had a very hot and dry last month and this has caused some burn-off problems. In consultation with our greenkeepers advisory panel, we have decided to implement a uniform rule that leads and seconds will not crowd the head.”

Rather, in a step back to what used to be the accepted practice, leads and seconds need to be on the bank.

“Supervisors and umpires have our full support on this matter although we expect full co-operation from the players,” Bennett said.

## Plenty of tough sections to intrigue

As has become custom in recent years, with the general downward trend of entries, "vinegar" draws are much less common place in the Taranaki Open. While 2019 entries are up, there are a number of sections very strong. They will present tough qualifying routes for a number of sides.

**Section 1:** Past winning skips Ray Park (Wanganui) and Darren Goodin (Paritutu), who was also runner-up last season, shape as the biggest names. Useful visitors Terry Cullen (Helensville), Steve Critchlow (Naenae) and Warren Hausman (Bulls) could surprise.

**Section 2:** 2017 Dominion singles winner Dean Elgar (West End) headlines the group. Howard Ivory, a quarterfinalist in 2018, should also feature along with Mort Jones (Hillcrest), Kapiti gold star holder Ray Hudson (Central Levin) and past Bowls NZ chairman, John Carter (Hutt).

**Section 3:** Three-time world champion Peter Belliss (Aramoho) is the big name. Kevin Smith (Hinuera), Mark Anderson (Tower) and Grant Pease (Fitzroy) are all past winners, albeit at the front end of sides.

**Section 4:** Two regular visitors, Ian Mahoney (Central Levin) and Ian Porteous (Aramoho), rate strong chances to still be around on Friday morning. After not playing last season, Paul Bartosh (Morrinsville RSA) returns and should be competitive, as will the Lowry family team from Rahotu, although skip Ian could be a bit short on match play. And big Bob Harris (Canterbury) has his best chance since being a semifinalist in 2008 of making the money rounds.

**Section 5:** Peter Berge and his West End side have filled the vacant slot at No 12 in the section. The ageless Rex Holmes (Paraparaumu Beach) looms again, with competition expected from John Sexton (West End) and Kevin Briscoe (Far North RSA).



**Section 6:** Brody Dix (right of frame) and his New Lynn side of Keith Ansell (second), Adam Wishnoski (lead) and Gary Dougherty (third) stormed through post section last year to take out the title. They will be hard to beat again. An interesting game this afternoon will be between Bruce Stewart (Havelock North) and Graham Baxter (Hawera Park). They were opposing thirds in the 2002 final. Grayson McEl-downey (New Plymouth) and Steve Liddington (Frankton Railway) would ordinarily expect to qualify.

**Section 7:** The 2016 champion, Brian Little (Palmerston North), Ross Thorn (Naenae) and Peter Dorreen (Far North RSA) always rate as tough opponents in the Open. But section 7 runs very deep. Roger Neilson (Wanganui East) and Leon Wech (Mairangi Bay) are well-performed, Rhys Hakkens (Waikanae Beach) a prolific competitor, while a side entered under the name of Chris Alldred (Australia) will be tough to crack. And Gerry O'Sullivan's all-but family team from Inglewood will also be competitive.

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**Section 8:** Peter Thompson (Paekakariki) was oh-so-close to the semifinals 12 months ago, while for consistent attendees on the Saturday it is hard to go past Cary Pinker (Wanganui East). Anton Ferrari (Naenae) and Ian Coombe (Mairangi Bay) are also familiar with that route.

**Section 9:** The Mangere club in Auckland has already claimed the men's Dominion singles and pairs titles so far this year. It's chance of a three-peat rests with Allan Stewart's side. Stewart was a member of Andrew Kelly's youthful team that lost the final of the 2006 Dominion fours. Mike Cavanagh (Pukekohe), Hamish Kape (Okato) and Bernie Martelletti (Te Puke) would all have hopes of qualifying. Kape, who won the Taranaki senior champion-of-champions singles last season, has included in his side Taylor Horn. Horn came from nowhere 13 days ago to win the Dominion singles title.

**Section 10:** Looms as a powerful group to advance from. Dan Delany (Royal Oak), a four-time winner, skips a good team. He is joined by arguably the strongest Taranaki side in the field, West End's Craig De Faria, formerly Johns. Gerard Slattery (Tui Park) and the 2015 runner-up Dean McMurchy (Kensington) will also provide stern opposition.

**Section 11:** John Claydon (Masterton), a semi-finalist in 2016, David Hood (Kerikeri) and Terry Osment (Johnsonville) all should be hard to beat. Three-time champion Gary Lilley (West End) remains very competitive, although he has the added distraction of looking after greens during the week. However, the biggest threat in the section could well be Bruce Phillips (Tower), pictured below.



**Section 12:** Following the withdrawal of two sides, there are now 12 in this group. Dave Selby (Hillcrest) and Kevin Coombe (Aramoho) square off in an interesting opening match this morning at Inglewood that could set the scene for the rest of the week for both sides. Ian Andrews (Paritutu) presents a solid line-up, while Noel Probyn (Fitzroy), another three-time winner, will also be hoping for another Sunday finish. He was third-equal last year.

## Massive field warms up at West End

The biggest field ever to take part in a pre-Open tournament was assembled at West End yesterday.

46 teams took part in the event, which organiser Graeme McDowell said was a great success. The tournament included the eight Australian teams.

"While the wind made it quite difficult at times, the day went off without any major hitches. It was the ideal preparation for many teams for this week's Open. It was great to see so many visitors acclimatising."

The prize winning teams were:

Green 1:

1. Glen Brookes (West End)
2. Cliff Marshall (Bay View)
3. Garry Murfitt (West End)
4. Paul Hassall (Tawa)

Green 2:

1. Ross Thorn (Naenae)
2. Tony Walsh (Fitzroy)
3. Graham Baxter (Hawera Park)
4. Mike Paton (Orewa)

Green 3:

1. Mike Cavanagh (Pukekohe)
2. Peter Dorreen (Far North RSA)
3. David Hood (Kerikeri)
4. Jack Philip (Sunshine Coast)



## Familiar faces to be missed as Hill returns

One of the unfortunate aspects of bowls as a sport is that all too frequently, bowlers are often cut down when they still have much to offer the game both on and off the green. Two such familiar faces missing from 2019 are Midge Shaw (Paritutu) and John Delany (Auckland).

Shaw competed in nearly 40 Taranaki Opens as a regular qualifier from the Palmerston North, East End and Paritutu clubs, the latter being his home at bowls for the past 32 years.

A beaten finalist in the pairs two years ago, his favourite playing story was making the last 16 of the Open in 1988. On the Saturday afternoon he was playing mighty Mick Heald, 12 months after meatpack Mick had famously won the Dominion fours.

Shaw trailed by eight shots playing the last end and had them before Heald killed the end and adverted the danger reappearing on the replay.

Shaw, who won three Taranaki centre titles, was an excellent servant, acting as section supervisor for over 20 years, ensuring that visitors were well catered for. Like all supervisors, he was the face of the tournament for the 14 teams each year in his section.



“People like Midge Shaw are what makes the Taranaki Open so special,” Bowls Taranaki president Brien Bennett QSM said. “They effectively put the section first, often at the expense of their own game.”

Shaw passed away just before Christmas and was given a rousing send-off, which included a lengthy address from his long-time work colleague and occasional bowls team mate, John Earles (Wilton).

John Delany, father of the famed Dan, died after a short illness early in the New Year. He had introduced Dan to bowls and took great delight in his son’s achievements, especially in the Taranaki Open.

That pleasure became even more profound in 2012 when Delany senior was a member of Dan’s team that took out the title. Mike

Nasey and Joe Whitelaw were also part of that side and it had been anticipated, until John Delany’s death, that the team would compete again this year.

As a replacement, Neville Hill, the father-in-law of Dan Delany, albeit without the legal paperwork, has come in as a replacement. Hill has been a regular visitor to the Open and was a finalist in 2014.



## Match of the morning—Mahoney v Drew

One of the more interesting matches in the first round could be the game between Ian Mahoney (Central Levin) and Nigel Drew (Birkenhead) at Vogeltown A.

Mahoney, who played in Taranaki for a number of years, winning two centre titles and contributing greatly to the increased standard of greens, remains an excellent competitor. He was a semifinalist last season but has an entirely new team this year — Sam Neill, Stacey Thomas and Dereck Taylor.

Drew, along with his lead, North Harbour rep Mark Rumble, played his way into the Birkenhead pairs final yesterday. That decider, though, was put on hold so the team could travel south. Mike Cartwright and Randall Watkins complete the Drew side.

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