

Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

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Increase in entries pleases President Andrews

There is plenty of anticipation around the bowls greens of New Plymouth this morning as 56 sides face the starter's gun in the 68th Taranaki women's Open fours competition.

Those 56 teams have been divided into four sections of 14 teams each for the next three days, where sides will play six 25-end games. They will all be searching for fun and pleasure, of course, but they will also be hunting for four victories from those six games – that being the qualifying criteria.

Bowls Taranaki President, Ian Andrews, said he was pleased with the response the tournament has received from bowlers.

“We were concerned last year when we managed only 48 teams. There was a clash with the Aotearoa Maori bowls in 2019, so we were confident that we would get an increase in numbers.”

Taranaki is hosting the Aotearoa Maori event this year – it starts on February 8 – and Andrews said there was some further concerns that some players may have preferred one over the other. However, this on the whole has not happened. “We take it as a positive endorsement on our conditions of play and everything else that Taranaki has to offer.”

Andrews said the men's Open fours, which attracted 160 sides and concluded on Sunday, had caused some wear on the greens, but much less than last year. “I must tip my hat to all the workers in the clubs, many of whom are backing up again this week. With-

out them this event would not happen.”

Last year's winner's Carol Cox, Sue Broadbent, Debbie White and outstanding skip Karen de Jongh, pictured below, have not returned to defend their title.

They beat Kristin Stampa's Hawera Park team of Ella Smailes, Irene Wallker and Pauline Kennedy 30-20 in last year's finale. Stampa and Kennedy have reunited again for this year. However, Girl Reweti and Marlborough titleholder Dorothy Turner will play up front this time.

Stampa is in fact the most recent victorious skip to return this year. She won the event in 2013.

Cheryl Hunia, who won the event in 2017 with Natarsha Grimshaw, and Val Langton and Eileen Rothwell, who were members of Bev Robinson's 2016 champion quartet, are all in the field as well.



Section C appears the toughest to qualify from

Luck in bowls can never be denied. And when it comes to the draw, luck will often play a huge part in determining how far teams progress. The 2020 Taranaki women's Open fours is no different, with a number of sides scheduled to meet a number of other very useful units during section play.

Section A: 2015 Dominion fours winner Pam Burgess (Wanganui) has a particularly useful looking side, including Dot Belliss who shared in that famous victory.

Ronnie Crone (Otaki) won the champion-of-champions pairs earlier in the month, her third Kapiti title, and will be a threat, as will past Bay of Plenty champion, Dawn Clark (Tauranga South). Heather Johns (Paritutu), one of Taranaki's best performed skips, has withdrawn. Her side will now be skipped by Barbara Harvey, with the new face from the programme being Carolyn Harris. Taranaki representative Maree Gadsby (Fitzroy) meets the Paritutu side in the opening game this morning at West End.

Section B: Playing today at Paritutu, where Cathy Andrews of the host club squares off with vastly experienced Manawatu player, Ngaire Cowen (Palmerston North). Visitors in the section include Bay of Plenty board member June Smith (Tauranga South), Teo Thorenson (Levin), who has three Kapiti titles, and last season's Wanganui open singles champion, Pauline Pirere.

Besides Andrews, local hopes could also sit with Margaret McCallum (Inglewood) and Liz Johnstone (Waitara).

Section C: Looms as the hardest group from

which to qualify. Three Bay of Plenty sides with aspirations are in the group – Marilyn Constantine (Tauranga), Martie Sissons (Ohope) and last season's NZ champion-of-champions pairs winners Wendy Green and Lynette McIntosh (Ngongotaha), who return with a good side. Anne Loveridge (Wanganui East) has been a dominant force in her home province for a number of years, while Karen Forrest (Manurewa), who has accumulated three NZ intercentre titles over the years, re-appears.

Val McEldowney (New Plymouth) needs no introduction, although she carries the extra responsibilities of supervisor in this event. Ellie Goble (Lepperton), Gloria Shaw (Paritutu) and Susan Cottam (West End) are also in the section where any qualifiers are sure to be a threat in post section.

Plays at Vogeltown today.

Section D: Raewyn Falconer (Frankton Junction), Sue Murray (Parkakariki), who previously won two titles in Wellington, and Mary Bettelheim (Ohope) are among the more prominent visitors.

However, Gayle Melrose (Papakura) is not in attendance this week. But her side remains with Melrose's place being taken by Hetty Bolscher. Bolscher is an Auckland gold star holder and won the Dominion fours in 2004.

Hawera Park's Kristin Stampa is in the section, along with Rhonda Adams (Fitzroy) and Cindy Nicoll (Inglewood). Adams has just returned from the World Indoor Championships in the United Kingdom, where she gave an excellent account of herself. Plays at Fitzroy today.

