

Open News - Taranaki Open Fours

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Positive increase in numbers, despite no Aussies

There will be a missing component to the 116th Taranaki men's Open fours that starts in north and central Taranaki today – no Australian teams.

Bowls Taranaki president, Ian Andrews, pictured right, said the non-attendance of the Australians was disappointing, but inevitable because of Covid-19 quarantine requirements.



“Their colour, exuberance and friendliness will certainly be missed. They have added much to the event over the last 15-or-so years and I, like many, yearn for a safer world and their return next season.”

Aside from that, Andrews indicated it was all systems go for 2021.

There are 164 teams starting out this morning, a modest increase of four, but not altogether insignificant given that there were 11 Australian teams in 2020.

“The response from other parts of New Zealand is most pleasing.”

The traditional format of two games of 25 ends each day remains, with four days of qualifying likely to whittle the field down to about 50 teams.

“That assumes that the weather plays its part,” Andrews said.

Forecasters are predicting showers, and some rain, over the first four days. “Ensuring the right balance between enjoyment and comfort, versus getting through the games, is an age-old problem for bowls administrators. But player safety is paramount.”

Changes to the draw

The original draw of 166 teams has been slightly tweaked after the net withdrawal of two sides.

Following the untimely death of Barry Wynks, the Takaro team entered under Mark Noble's name elected to withdraw. Subsequently, another Takaro team, skipped by Brent Mason, also pulled out. Previously, Brent Stubbins (Johnsonville) had also made the unfortunate decision to withdraw.

Stubbins place in section five has been taken by Aiden Takarua (Pt Chevalier). Section seven has been reduced to 12 teams. Following the exit of Mason, Ivan Heal (West End) has been transferred over to Noble's place in section one.

“It's not ideal,” Grant Hassall said. “But the only byes we want in this tournament are in the first round of post section.”

Beware of traffic delays

Roadworks between Inglewood and Stratford could cause traffic delays, the NZTA has warned.

Significant work is being undertaken at the Rugby Road underpass near Tariki and as a result of this, stop-go signs will be operated.

The NZTA has suggested that delays of up to 30 minutes may occur, although media reports in recent days have indicated that the time could in fact be longer.

While there are some alternative routes, these generally involve narrow country roads and one-lane bridges.

Organisers are encouraging all teams that are required to pass through to allow more time for their trip. “It's better to get there half an hour early, as opposed to half an hour late,” Hassall suggested.

Unknown teams pose plenty of risks

Part of the curiosity of a tournament like the Taranaki Open fours is the sense of the unknown. Inevitably, teams will tangle with opponents that they have never heard of. But often those unknowns become well-remembered. Scattered throughout the sections there are a number of big names and also those lesser known but potentially very dangerous. Standby for plenty of upsets during the week.

Section 1: The withdrawal of Mark Noble has created a much more even feel to the section, with Taranaki rep Stefan McCartain (Paritutu) — his No 3 is centre president Ian Andrews — one side looking to stamp their mark. Steven Brien (Stokes Valley) is a coming man in the Capital, Geoff Bovey knows how to win centre titles, while Steve Liddington (Hillcrest) — a protégé of the great Robbie Robson — and Peter Doreen (Far North RSA) present capable teams. Interest will also centre on Garry Banks (Ponsonby), who made the last 16 of the pairs in Auckland. His side includes both the current Bowls NZ CEO, Mark Cameron, and the Bowls NZ president, Mark O'Connor.

Section 2: The 2018 winner Brody Dix (Papakura), Kevin Coombe (Aramoho) and Ian Lowry (Rahotu) all feature regularly in post section, and the former two have also won the pairs. However, all three sides will meet each other, meaning the path will not be as clear this time. Of the locals, Paddy Deegan (Opunake) is a potential qualifier.

Section 3: Defending champion Bruce Phillips (Tower) returns with the same team as last year — Mark Kuklinski, John Roberts and Scott Roberts. They are a well-rounded side that will take some beating. But they don't have it easy. They start this morning with a match against the 2006 Dominion fours winner, Ross Thorn (Naenae), this afternoon comes the under-rated Leon Wech (Mairangi Bay) and tomorrow morning there is a game with Taranaki gold star holder, John Sexton (West End). But potentially Phillips' toughest assignment is in round seven against Dan Dickison (Tauranga).

Section 4: A good opening clash to watch will be between Jeremy Brosnan (Glen Eden) and Mark Anderson (Tower) at West End. Brosnan made the last 16 of the national singles recently, while Anderson is a dual winner of the Open. Also lurking in the section is Bart Robertson, with a similar side to the one which made it through to the money rounds in 2020. Daniel Geaney (Blockhouse Bay) and Noel Probyn (Fitzroy) could surprise the more fancied teams.

Section 5: The addition of rising star Aiden Takarua (Pt Chevalier) will make a number of team's qualifying paths in the section more difficult. Takarua's team comprises Callum Height, a former Middleton Cup player in England; Colin Williams, who last week won the Auckland mixed pairs; and Alex Reed, who won the inaugural Bowls3five TV league with Takarua. Takarua's fourth round clash with fellow Auckland Keith Ansell (New Lynn) will be a keenly contested one. Dean Elgar (West End) remains one of the brightest chances of a local victory in the event, while Bruce Harris (Johnston Park) has a useful side.

Section 6: Neville Hill (Royal Oak) and Paul Matheson (Halswell) are both contenders — refer to page four for their match-up this morning. Former Bowls NZ chairman John Carter (Hutt) is a regular qualifier, as are Scotty McGavin (Bulls) and Ray Hudson (Central Levin).

Section 7: Picking a side to win the Open is highly challenging. But some pundits have suggested Raymond Martin — the 2020 Dominion pairs winner — could do that this year. After a long absence from his home city, Martin returns with a strong side, which includes Mike Carroll, Rod Leitch and Grant Wakefield. Teo Turua (Royal Oak) should feature strongly, while other competitive teams include Warwick Fredrickson (Blockhouse Bay), Grant Pease (Fitzroy), Mike Oldfield (Tauranga South) and Steve Smith (Kensington).



Section 8: Over the last 10 years in the Open, Brian Little (Palmerston North) possesses an undeniable record — including a win, three runners-up and two quarterfinals. They are the team to beat in the section. There are teams capable, too. Included in this category are competitive northern teams Ian Coombe (Mairangi Bay) and Don Ramsey (Pukekohe), along with Ian Mahoney (Central Levin). Anton Ferrari (Naenae) made the last eight in 2020. The section has in it a number of potentially dangerous Taranaki teams.

Section 9: West End's Craig De Faria is searching for his third successive final. Having been the winner in 2019 and runners-up in 2020 (and then only after five extra ends), De Faria is a strong chance again. He has two new players up front this time — Bruce Lilley and Bruce Hall — while Steve Walker remains at No 3. Cary Pinker (Wanganui East) performs consistently, David Hood (Whangarei) has an impressive resume in the north, while Mike Cavanagh (Pukekohe) has regularly upset prominent teams.

Section 10: There will be very few easy games in this section. It includes two of the most experienced and successful skips in the North Island — three-time runners-up Rex Holmes (Paraparaumu Beach) and the 2005 champion Ray Park (Wanganui). But then

there is also Terry Osment (Johnsonville), Malcolm Moore (Hillcrest) and Jason Hawe (Johnston Park) to content with. Gerry O'Sullivan (Inglewood) and Warren Bellringer (New Plymouth) ordinarily qualify comfortably.

Section 11: Peter Belliss (Aramoho) needs no introduction in New Zealand bowls, nor does Darren Goodin (Paritutu) in Taranaki bowls. Both are expected to set the pace in the section. Belliss continues to set a wonderful example of how the game should be played and how it deserves to be treated. There are alternatives elsewhere in the section, including Nigel Drew (Birkenhead). Drew didn't compete in the 2020 event, after making the semi-finals in 2019. Barry Allison (Far North RSA) and Paul Clegg (Hawera Park) head capable sides.

Section 12: A host of good visiting teams are going to take some beating in the group. They include the 2014 winner Kevin Smith (Hinuera), the 2019 Dominion singles champion Taylor Horn (Mangere), the 2002 winner Bruce Stewart (Havelock North) and a couple of good sides from the Capital — Naki Nehemia (Johnsonville) and Iain Opray (Hutt). The Stewart-Smith game this morning at Lepper-ton will be interesting.

Rain curtails West End pre-Open after one and a half games

Rain soon after lunch saw a premature finish to the West End pre-Open tournament yesterday.

Organiser, Graeme McDowell, said that one full game and then part of the second round were completed before the heavy deluge saw the greens flooded. "The guys have a long week ahead of them and the last thing we want is for them to get wet now."

The prize-winning teams were:

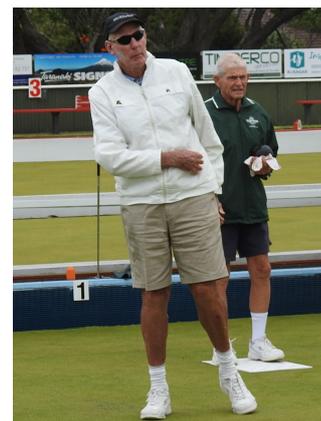
Green 1:

1. Colin Lozell (Northern) 2 wins +12
2. Andrew Bowden (Parklands) 2 wins +11
3. Leon Wech (Mairangi Bay) 2 wins +9
4. Craig De Faria (West End) 2 wins +6

Green 2:

1. Kevin Smith (Hinuera) 2 wins +28
2. Hamish Kape (Okato) 2 wins +26
3. Mike Oldfield (Tauranga South) 2 wins +9
4. Sandy Robinson (Omarunui) 2 wins +7

Two of the competing skips at West End yesterday were former Olympian and rowing legend Tony Popplewell ONZM, the current Bowls North Harbour chairman (left), and well-known Far North identity, Marty Doak.



In-form players from the Dominion start in Open

Six of the 16 players that contested the quarterfinals of the New Zealand pairs earlier in the month in Auckland will be involved in this week's Open.

Heading that list are the runners-up from the pairs, Mike Bradshaw and John Carruthers. They lost the final to Lance Pascoe and Jamie Hill.

Bradshaw is listed to play at No 3 for Hill's father, Neville, while Carruthers is playing for Teo Turua.

The Turua side also includes two players who have enjoyed great success in the Open – Joe Whitelaw, a three-time winner, and Dan Delany, a four-time champion.

The other players who did well in the pairs at the Dominion tournament were Dan Dickison, Jerry Belcher, Hamish Kape and Aidean Takarua.

Dickison put on a splendid show in making the semifinals in a bold bid to replicate what his father, Phil, and uncle, Ian, had achieved precisely 40 years ago. But frustratingly he and Nick Tomsett dropped a three on the last end of the semifinal against Bradshaw and Carruthers to lose by one shot.

Dickison, pictured right, gets the opportunity to make amends this week skipping a strong

Tauranga side of John O'Shea, Lance Tasker and Steve Hughes. The same quartet made the quarterfinals of the 2020 Open.

O'Shea and Tasker also featured in Auckland, respectively ousting Shannon McIlroy and Michael Kernaghan from the post section rounds in the singles.

Takarua, of Bowls3five fame, made the quarterfinals of the pairs in Auckland and skips a well-pointed, youthful team here.

Belcher and Kape made the last eight of the pairs together. But they are in different teams this week. Belcher plays for Jeremy Brosnan while Kape is with Taylor Horn.

Rory Soden, the runner-up in the singles in Auckland, was scheduled to play in the Open for Brody Dix. However, he has in fact not made the trip south.



Match of the morning—Hill v Matheson

Vogeltown A is the place to go this morning if you want to watch an action-packed match.

There you will see Neville Hill (Royal Oak) meet Paul Matheson (Halswell).

Hill is a vastly experienced player and a former New Zealand rep. His side includes Bruce McDermott, Sam Toloke and Mike Bradshaw. Hill and Bradshaw were beaten finalists in the 2014 Open.

Matheson skips a very similar side to the one that made the semifinals last year.

Lawrence Quek and Kevin Greenwood return. The 1998 Dominion singles winner Kelvin Scott is the new face. He comes in for Darryl Hawker, who sadly passed away last July.

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