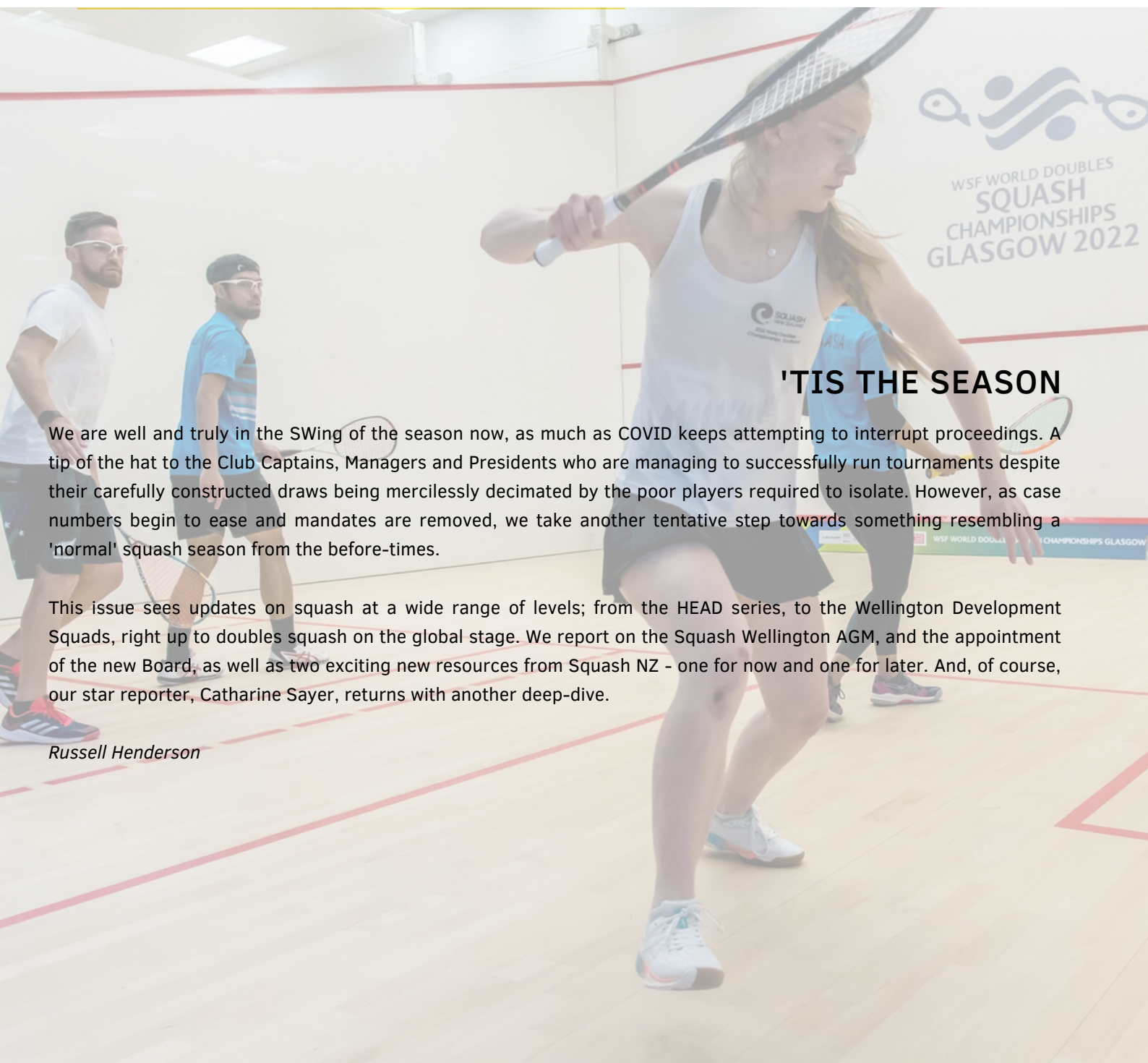


APRIL 22

ISSUE 2

IN THE SWING

Squash Wellington Newsletter



'TIS THE SEASON

We are well and truly in the SWing of the season now, as much as COVID keeps attempting to interrupt proceedings. A tip of the hat to the Club Captains, Managers and Presidents who are managing to successfully run tournaments despite their carefully constructed draws being mercilessly decimated by the poor players required to isolate. However, as case numbers begin to ease and mandates are removed, we take another tentative step towards something resembling a 'normal' squash season from the before-times.

This issue sees updates on squash at a wide range of levels; from the HEAD series, to the Wellington Development Squads, right up to doubles squash on the global stage. We report on the Squash Wellington AGM, and the appointment of the new Board, as well as two exciting new resources from Squash NZ - one for now and one for later. And, of course, our star reporter, Catharine Sayer, returns with another deep-dive.

Russell Henderson

PARTICIPATION

HEAD 9HUNDY AND WOMENS 800

Both series were scheduled to kick off last month but it wasn't to be with COVID spreading its wings and forcing players and volunteers into isolation. The Ōtaki leg of the 800 Series was therefore postponed until later in the season (date TBC). However Khandallah did manage to run the first of the 9Hundy, albeit with pull outs on the day but it was great to at least give our juniors some court time.

As we go to print, Island Bay are preparing for the 2nd tournament of the series so if you are out and about, pop in to cheer on some of our youngest slip and slide across the court.

The Women's series will now kick off at Mana Squash on 01 May. Players can register for both via iSquash or contact the Club contract listed on the posters at the back of this newsletter.



DUBS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER

The WSF World Squash Doubles are currently underway in Glasgow, Scotland. Running from the 5th to the 9th of April, the competition features teams from fifteen nations – almost double the number that entered last time it ran three years ago in Gold Coast. Joining Team New Zealand is Wellington's own Evan Williams, who is competing in the Mixed Draw, partnered with Kaitlyn Watts.

Catch the action via the Squash NZ and Squash Wellington Facebook pages, with live streaming also on YouTube and the official site – wsfworldddoubles.com. For an intimate look at life at an international doubles tournament, Evan is doing a takeover of the Squash Wellington Instagram, so head to [squash_wellington](https://www.instagram.com/squash_wellington) on the 'gram to take a look.

PARTICIPATION - FEATURE ARTICLE

PLAYER REVIEW, MISS DU TOIT, ON THE YES LET DECISION

In the SWing's Catharine Sayer conducts a video review of the play and awards a stroke to the Thorndon B-grader and 2021 Wellington Junior Girls' team member Hannah du Toit.

Yes, the literary licence is blatant; video referee decisions aren't yet part of our grassroots scene, but I'm left with the distinct impression that if they were, Miss du Toit (pronounced "toy") would never squander a review on a vanity call. It's not that she's meek or over-deferent – quite the opposite – but she exudes an aura of being right but not righteous.

Freshers' week with a difference

I'm lucky to score the interview at all; most first year undergraduates in their first fortnight would be otherwise occupied of an evening, but Covid has borne us the gift of self-isolation. "Yeah, it's been a strange start, getting Covid in the first week", Hannah reflects on her introduction to the University of Otago. What, wait? You've had Covid? Indeed, she has been "actually quite sick: I had no appetite!".

It's still early enough in Omicron's wave for conversing with a Covid patient to feel like a novelty of sorts but she assures me she feels fine and is looking forward to seeing somewhere other than her room and the ablutions on what'll be release day tomorrow. The next day's all planned, with a library visit and run with friends on the cards. I don't like to dampen the enthusiasm, but even after being cooped up for a ten-stretch, there are surely more exotic excursions in Dunners for a fresher than the library.



It was about time you got a shot of my backhand cross-court nicks, Mum; I've been doing them all day.

Transition

We talk at length about major shifts in location and culture, Hannah revealing that just 4 years ago at the age of 14 she immigrated from dusty Pretoria, South Africa from a Afrikaans-speaking all-girls school to the lush green bush of Karori and the eclectic Wellington High School. "I fell in love with the culture instantly: the avoidance of conformist thinking really gelled with me and my family". That's not to say it was without fear; breaking into established friend groups presented a challenge that Hannah was determined to overcome. Rather than gradual assimilation, her method was to throw herself into new activities, such as Shakespeare acting and football.

Putting herself into challenging circumstances is a route to success that's served her well. "I thrive on fear", she admits. "Having little time to get something done or little idea of what to do forces me to make an effective plan and seems to bring out the best in me." We still agree that pulling all-nighters on uni assignments might not be the wisest idea, especially given her enrolment on the demanding Health Sciences programme.

She wasn't always top of the class: Hannah explains that a hunger to excel academically only arose after finding her extra-curricular activities so rewarding which, "spurred me on to attend all my classes and push myself at my studies to see how well I could do". I ignore the inference that she was an occasional wag, for fear she'll suck away the little juice I have managed to squeeze and anyway, she hastily moves on to recount her pride in winning an inter-college STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) Challenge with a select team of classmates. I don't



Receiving the STEM Challenge award on behalf of the team, looking very much like the captain after all.

PARTICIPATION - FEATURE ARTICLE

ask, but given how squashies are over-achievers in life, it's a fair assumption she was the appointed skipper.

Homework

I've paid lip-service to respect to Hannah's time by sending her pre-reading, a Sunday Star Times two-pager from the weekend about #itsmymove, the latest government campaign to keep teenage girls active. I announce that it's time to discuss it, expecting to hear about a couple of points that might've resonated. Instead, Hannah unleashes a multitude of facts and opinions making the article appear mere fluff. My own thoughts feel similarly lightweight, especially after she casually mentions having penned a 3,000-word scholarship-winning essay on the topic.

She enlightens me on gender-based cultural biases for sporting success, in which male hunger for sporting achievement is normative but treated as exceptional for females, the result being development pathways through the age-groups that are seamless for boys but missing or patchy for girls.

Hannah's nevertheless complimentary about the Squash Wellington Junior Squad, of which she was a member in 2021. Admitting to reservations at the start, ("the Wellington junior scene is so small, I wasn't keen on revealing weaknesses to my rivals,") I hear about the camaraderie and support fostered in and by the girls.

Toxic

Since she's hinted at her competitive edge, I probe this further. For someone whose presence at squash tournaments is unassuming, her confidence, verve and self-awareness are compelling:

- The grading list is "toxic" and is to be avoided at all costs: "It's easy to reduce your performance assessments to the bare stats and with it, your confidence; it can make you defeatist before you've even started the warm-up!"
- "I started getting coaching with Ray [Lindsay, then operating out of Club Kelburn] as I figured I'd learned everything my Dad had to teach me," she giggles, in a classic punch-in-a-velvet-glove delivery. "Dad and I did also end up annoying each other."
- "I'm not motivated by grading points or a love of winning; playing is a test as to how far I can physically, but mostly mentally, push myself."

These traits aren't confined to squash either; when we observe that the university didn't suggest room-based workouts for the Covid isolationists, Hannah insists that she'll bring that up at a Covid care review meeting with the administration the next day, despite my suggestion that the university might've wanted to avoid guilt-tripping under-the-weather or just plain depressed students: "Nah, they really didn't prioritise our physical health, simple as, and they should've!". Her delivery will no doubt have been honed from membership of Wellington High School's school council.



Not the women's changing room during Second Serve nor an excerpt from the 1970s Camo Lookbook but Hannah, standing far left, as Juno in Shakespeare's As You Like It



The accolades keep coming: Hannah achieves a Wellington High record of fewest goals (8) conceded in a half of soccerball.

PARTICIPATION - FEATURE ARTICLE

Awards

In what's believed to be a first, Hannah was the recipient of her school's Thomas Stace Award for Supreme Sports Performance on the back of achievements in squash. Her secondary citations were for captaincy of the football second XI, captaincy of the badminton team and membership of the football first XI.

Despite brushing aside the juggling and energy involved in playing back-to-back matches for the two football teams, ("yeah, I suppose it took a bit of time, but playing goalie doesn't need much running around!"), she is grateful for the opportunities afforded by captaincy: getting to know more people, figuring out what makes others tick, how to make different personalities gel and enjoying the power and fun of what a collective can achieve. On a CV these skills would be neatly filed under "Leadership", yet I don't get a strong sense of her endeavours having been motivated by the need to pad this out or add flannel to a scholarship application. I crassly probe that thought anyway and instantly feel sheepish for doing so after being strongly rebuffed, in the nicest possible way of course. "I really only do things to try something new and meet new people".

Scorched almond

Despite the steely core, Hannah has a sugar-coated crust. For a young woman whose main sport is a singular activity, she's genuinely sad that the rep team didn't get to go on tour last year, it being an opportunity to equal or surpass her favourite sporting memories to date: hanging out with her besties (the district U14 girls' team) at comps around South Africa.

Hannah's aware that belonging and togetherness are crucial to getting many women involved in sport. As we talk about how much Thorndon meant to her and that she may even join a "grown up" club in Dunedin, rather than the varsity club, to experience the community feel, she tells me about a Thorndon ladies' night: "There were a couple of women watching the action but looking a bit forlorn and unsure about how to get involved. I went up and introduced myself and asked what had brought them along and whether they'd hit before. They hadn't, so I made sure we got on court together and got things started for them."

Sure, it won't earn her a sainthood, but the realisation – and generosity – that two beginners would get more out of squash from twenty minutes with her than she'd get from an intense hit with another B-grader that night speaks volumes.

McNormal

We've chit-chatted and laughed without pause for over an hour and, while the distinction between day and night isn't particularly



Newly crowned recipient of the Thomas Stace Cup for Supreme Athletic Endeavour. The fella wasn't nearly such a try-hard, with an effortless win for Most Bouffant Hair.

meaningful to students, I reluctantly make my excuses. At this point, Hannah remembers that there is a more exotic destination than the library after all: a visit to KFC after one institutional meal-on-a-tray too many. "I've been having Zinger Burger cravings so badly I'd be better off just giving in," she reasons. And with that, she convinces me that there's plenty of ordinary mixed in with the extraordinary.



Futsal? Huh? You never said anything about futsal. I suppose you were the skipper of that too...

DEVELOPMENT

Wellington Squads – They're here...

Following the successful Squad programmes last year, it was great to see a range of players put themselves forward for 2022 – some familiar faces returned, and some new talent emerged. The Junior and Senior Squads had their first training camp on Sunday 27th March, led by coach extraordinaire Evan Williams. The Masters Squad will have their first camp on Saturday 23rd April under the helm of Matt Green, last year's recipient of Squash NZ Performance Coach of the Year, no less. With such high-quality coaching we will no doubt see some serious progress over the coming months; if you find yourself on court with an opponent wearing a Squash Wellington jersey, you'd better bring your A-game!

We are delighted to announce that we have secured a partnership with AZ Flooring, who have generously agreed to sponsor all three Development Squads and Representative Teams in 2022. Huge thanks to Malcolm, Nicola, and the rest of the team at AZ for making the programmes achievable for this year.

We'd also like to thank Hutt City Squash for generously providing the court space for the training camps. We are very fortunate to have access to such great facilities with the room to accommodate our talented Juniors, Seniors and Masters.

The pictures here are from the first Junior camp and Senior camp, both held on 27th March. As you can see, Evan wasted no time in getting the players involved in a range of skill and fitness-based activities. Their racquets did get an airing as well!

Below is the list of players participating in this year's programme:



DEVELOPMENT

Senior Development Squad

Becky Barnett – Hutt City
 Gemma Gee – Hutt City
 Abby Wotten – Tawa
 Taylor Jones – Tawa
 Sam Douglas – Hutt City
 Jeanne Yells – Khandallah
 Emma Thorpe – Thorndon
 Evan Williams – Hutt City
 Matt Green – Tawa
 Jonathan Barnett – Hutt City
 Michael McCarroll – Thorndon
 James Thompson – Khandallah
 Marcelo De Nardi – Hutt City

Masters Development Squad

Damien Lower – Wainuiomata
 Brendan White – Tawa
 Lee Chambers – Khandallah
 James Fingleton – Khandallah
 Tim Seymour – Kāpiti
 Gary Aukett – Hutt City
 Matt Green – Tawa
 James Poskitt – Wainuiomata
 Bryan Smith – Hutt City
 Lars Stannard – Island Bay
 Evan Michelson – Island Bay
 Alf Izzett – Hutt City
 Richie Hoare – Tawa
 Geordie Grieve – Tawa
 Alissha Canning – Hutt City
 Nicki Gibbs – Kāpiti
 Carolyn Thompson – Khandallah
 Lee-Ann Du Toit – Thorndon
 Cheryl Sullivan – Island Bay
 Diane Cardwell – Hutt City
 Julie Geange – Island Bay
 Karen Dravitzki – Mana
 Jeanne Yells – Khandallah
 Leanne Dawson – Hutt City
 Honor Greyling – Tawa



Junior Development Squad

Maiden Lee-Coe – Mana
 Mackenzie Tait – Masterton
 Kyra Wyeth – Red Star
 Sophia De-Nardi Gonzalez – Hutt City
 Molly Hawkins – Hutt City
 Oliver Dunbar – Tawa
 Otis Brown – Island Bay
 Shay Gannon – Mana
 Patrick Nicholson – Martinborough
 Sam Morris – Red Star
 Ben Jones – Red Star
 Ben Newman – Masterton
 Bobby Stannard – Island Bay
 Hamish Shaw – Martinborough
 Jack Yeo – Island Bay
 Alex Walsh – Mana
 James Rukuwai – Thorndon
 Riley Priest – Upper Hutt
 Alex Fingleton – Khandallah
 Eamon Gannon – Mana
 Jake Allen – Masterton
 Nate Kennerley – Hutt City

CLUB CAPABILITY

The launch of SquashSmart

SquashSmart is the new learning platform which clubs and members can access. In here you'll find useful lessons across four key topics. Coaching, Club Management, Refereeing and Tournament Control.

The platform is pretty intuitive so it won't take you long to find your way around. The modules are also relatively quick and target to the topic.

If you haven't already, go check it out at www.squashsmart.co.nz. To access the modules you'll need to register. We will keep you posted on each module release, until then have a look and reach out if you need a hand. Check out some of the modules that will be available below.



In development – iSquash 2.0 (which is not the actual name btw)

Squash New Zealand have confirmed a partnership which will take them into the future by linking with New Zealand-based tech group Friendly Manager to provide a complete new sport management system.

The changing needs of the New Zealand squash community drove the exploration of tech solutions that could cater for their current and future needs from all clubs big and small around the country. It is anticipated the implementation of the new all-encompassing sport system will be early 2023 thanks to the large-scale consultation between SNZ and Friendly Manager.

"We have worked really hard to ensure that Friendly Manager understand the needs of squash in New Zealand and what will be required for the future," said Chief Executive Martin Dowson. "We know that there will be many changes to our requirements as time goes by and we need to be confident this system can handle both the changes we do and don't anticipate. Friendly Manager have been great at listening to us and presenting us with solutions that are innovative and give us confidence the system will benefit the whole squash community."

Squash NZ are clear the solution has to add real value to all stakeholders in the Squash community from clubs, players, to officials, to national staff and in doing so, create a system that will provide an integrated and trusted source of truth and eliminate any double handling of data.

The key requirements the project has been based around are more in-depth data insights, seamless user experiences, powerful competition management with player grading and an integrated club and member management offering for clubs.

What's in a name?

Watch this space for an opportunity to put forward name suggestions for the new platform. Friendly Manager is just a placeholder.



CLUB CAPABILITY

AGM

The 2022 Squash Wellington AGM took place on the evening of Monday, 28th March. Mana Squash Club kindly offered to host the meeting, but the call was made to move to Zoom due to the number of people required to isolate due to testing positive with COVID, or being household contacts of positive cases.

As we didn't receive enough nominations for new Board Members to form a functional board, we re-opened the nomination period following the AGM. This time we received enough nominations to fill all seven seats for elected Board Members – a number which has increased from five following a constitutional amendment made at the AGM. It is exciting to have a full board of diverse, experienced individuals, most of whom will be familiar names to members of the Wellington squash scene.

Draft AGM minutes will be made available in due course via the Squash Wellington website. In the meantime, here are our Board Members for 2022:

Ann Smith (Hutt City)
Storm McKenna (Red Star)
Catharine Sayer (Island Bay)
Malcolm Thomas (Tawa)
Aaron Hape (Thorndon)
Christine Rukuwai (Thorndon)
Emma Brown (Hutt City)

COVID Update

COVID continues to be a regular In the SWing column, at least for the time being. This month's update relates to recent changes to the Covid Protection Framework (CPF), and how it affects squash in our district.

As you will be aware, as of earlier this week, there is no longer a requirement to use My Vaccine Pass (MVP) for indoor sport and hospitality. Squash Wellington continues to follow advice from Squash NZ, and Sport NZ, and in line with this advice, we no longer require MVP at district-level events, including Interclub, and the HEAD 800 and HEAD 9Hundy series.

We are still at 'Red' setting on the CPF, which means that capacity at clubs will be limited to 200 (admittedly, it may be a little optimistic to expect more than 200 people to attend a squash tournament at any one time)! Facemasks are still mandatory and given the substantial number of cases we have had, and continue to have, among our club members I urge you to continue to wear masks when not on court or partaking in club room refreshments.

Coming up..

Upper Hutt B & Below – 8-10 April
Wairarapa Masters @ Red Star – 8-10 April
HEAD 9Hundy @ Island Bay – 10 April
Hutt City B & Below – 15-17 April
Hutt City Ladies Open – 22-24 April
Masterton April Open – 29-30 April
HEAD 800 @ Mana – 1 May
Tawa Open – 6-8 May
HEAD 9Hundy @ Martinborough – 8 May
Winter Interclub – Men's/Mixed & Women's from w/c 2 May (entries close 18 April) Masters from w/c 16 May (entries close 2 May)