

IN THE SWING

Squash Wellington Newsletter

From the District Administrator

Is it March already? It must mean the squash season is officially back. For some it no doubt feels that it never went away, with so much great activity continuing over the summer, such as the (award winning) Mana Summer Leagues, intraclub, the new Summer Masters Interclub, as well as double doubles action at Hutt City (read on for an update of the Wellington Doubles).

Now that March is here, we're back into the rhythm of (at least) one tournament each weekend, the HEAD 800 and HEAD 900 series are almost upon us, and Mixed & Women's Interclub resumes this week.

This issue covers everything from Squash NZ's new initiative to get more people started on the squash court, to a very exciting announcement about the very best players in the world gracing our shores.

Our reporter in the field, Catharine Sayer, has outdone herself this month, continuing her series of deep dive interviews, this time with Martin Krafft. Martin generously devoted huge amounts of time and energy to squash at Thorndon, and in our district, before we said "auf wiedersehen" earlier this year.

Read on for an update on Wellington Squads, some serious facility upgrades, and where the action is over the coming weeks.

Russell Henderson

2022 WELLINGTON DOUBLES

February saw the introduction of this brand-new tournament that sought to capitalise on the ever-increasing popularity of the doubles form of squash, and provide a further opportunity to use the international doubles courts at Hutt City – one of the only places in the country with these facilities. Some terrific teams took to the courts, supplying exciting (and highly entertaining) matches, often at breakneck speeds.

Coming out on top of the mixed division were Nicki Gibbs and James Gould of Kāpiti, with Nicki also taking the women’s title alongside Hutt City’s Emma Brown, despite having only joined forces minutes before their first match! Winning the men’s division were the formidable pairing of Scott Galloway of Hutt City, and Brian Tapurau.

Please let us know if you would like this event to continue, and if so, what it should look like. Should it be programmed at the end of the season, after the existing run of doubles tournaments? Do we open it up to any combination of players, e.g. teams of two A graders? Should there be more costumes? Get in touch to pass on your views – they are especially valuable with a new event like this.



EVAN WILLIAMS TO COMPETE IN WORLD DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

In further doubles-related news, our very own Evan Williams has been announced as part of the New Zealand team set to compete at the World Doubles Championships in Glasgow from 5th - 9th April. Evan will team up with Manawatu's Kaitlyn Watts to compete in the mixed draw. Go Evan!

The full team is:

Men - Paul Coll, Evan Williams, Lwamba Chileshe, Temwa Chileshe,

Women - Joelle King, Amanda Landers-Murphy, Kaitlyn Watts, Abbie Palmer

COVID PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

What would an issue of In The SWing be without a Covid-related update?!

There have been further updates to the Covid Protection Framework (CPF, or Traffic Light System) guidelines, and this is reflected in the updated version of Sport NZ's table (go to <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/4755/snz-cpf-one-pager-17-12.pdf> or alternatively Google "sport nz cpf one pager squash" for the latest version). The main rows on the table to look at are row 1 (casual play, Interclub, Intraclub), row 2 (tournaments), row 9 (clubrooms without a bar), and row 10 (clubrooms with a bar).

The key change concerns facemasks at Red, and this applies to all situations (casual play, tournaments, hospitality), and at all clubs (with vaccination passes and without vaccination passes).

The wording has now changed to "Facemasks are mandatory at all times when not participating" for squash, and "Facemasks are mandatory at all times when not playing, eating or drinking" for clubrooms.

Previously, the wording had said that facemasks were recommended, but they are now mandatory. Put simply they must now be worn at all times, unless you are on court, or sat down in the clubroom and eating or drinking.

Squash NZ have some useful resources on their website, including a list of FAQs. Go to squashnz.co.nz/for-clubs/covid-19.cfm or navigate to the Squash NZ website and click "Club Support" - "Covid 19".



Coming up on 12th - 13th March is this new initiative from Squash NZ, designed to get more people on court and having a go at the world's greatest sport. Participating clubs are having an open day, with follow up activities, such as coaching programmes, court access, and social leagues. It's great to see several clubs across our region opening their doors to newcomers. For more specific information, please see the individual clubs:

- Club Kelburn
- Hutt City
- Red Star
- Tawa
- Upper Hutt



NZ SQUASH OPEN

Last week saw the announcement of the NZ Squash Open, to take place on 8th to 13th November at the Trustpower Arena in Tauranga. From Squash NZ:

“It has been almost 30 years since the last NZ Men’s Open Squash tournament, and 13 years since the Women’s Championship. The long-awaited return of the NZ Squash Open, part of the PSA World Tour, will bring exciting wall-to-wall action to Tauranga and New Zealand.”

Squash fans will have their first chance in a few years to welcome home Joelle King, current world #6, and Paul Coll, who you have no doubt heard is now the first ever NZ man to reach world #1. Alongside Joelle and Paul will be more of the world’s top squash players, details of whom will be announced later this year. Stay up to date via the dedicated website: nzsquashopen.co.nz

2022 JUNIOR AND SENIOR SQUADS

After a good response from junior and senior players hoping to train with the Wellington Squads this year, the selection panel has reviewed the applications and is set to announce the squad members for 2022 very soon. Make sure you’re following the Squash Wellington Facebook page so you don’t miss the announcement. Expressions of Interest for the Masters Squad will be open very soon – this will also be announced on Facebook.



FEATURE ARTICLE

KRAFFTWERK: TO A KIWI SQUASH BEAT



While most district squashies are having a token dabble at bodysurfing or beach cricket to fill in time before the 2022 season, In the SWing staff reporter CATHARINE SAYER is still on the job as is Martin Krafft, the outgoing Thorndon club captain. He's busy tying up loose ends at work and domestically before leaving for Europe but still graciously makes time for a chat.

Get shirty

Having failed to turn up in one of his several Island Bay shirts, I give him another chance by asking him to identify his favourite club shirt. Unfortunately, he fails at that, revealing that his favourites come and go in waves triggered by recollections of good times. Today he's packed a Mana number for his evening hit, and presumably an Island Bay one as back-up (always good times in the Bay, right?), but the bulk of his inventory has been garnered from much further afield.

Nomad

Martin's a seasoned squash traveller and many of the yards were done the hard way, hitch-hiking being his vehicle of choice, despite the odd, um, hitch: a South Island tour in the middle of winter got off to a false start right after the Greymouth Open, with a 6 hour wait for a southbound ride at Hokitika, only for the driver's destination to be just

300m down the road. After wisely reverting to rail to cross the Great Divide, things eventually panned out; he made the Southland Open in Invercargill on time via the 'world famous in NZ' slopes of Twizel (of the alpine downhill variety) and the Catlins (of the Pointy variety) and the squash clubs of Wanaka, Alexandra, and Balclutha.

In the beginning

In the beginning was a tennis player, in fact a regional youth champion, who by adulthood had taken to striking a black rubber ball against four walls (he refuses to call it squash), rinsed and repeated on a weekly basis to no particular satisfaction. On arrival in NZ, he tried more of the same, at Thorndon, but within a fortnight had been pressed into interclub, tournament and Superchamps action, with compulsory après-squash. This concept of squash as individual sport, team sport and social activity had instant appeal.

This was also the time to bring his game up to scratch. Initially graded at low C1, Martin is reluctant to recall his performances of that time, describing himself as a, “novice, tactically and technically”. For the shift up to B-grade he credits a decent stint of coaching with Evan Williams, the Oliver Apex 700 racquet and the countless hours training, and puts more recent improvements down to competitive action aplenty.

In the middle

With an ability to get things done, it took only 2 years before Martin found himself club captain. This he didn't specifically seek out, but was thrust upon him by an astute committee oblivious to the niceties of informed consent. While most would not-so-politely decline, Martin took it as an opportunity, already having ideas on how to build upon Thorndon's work-in-progress of improving the club's value proposition. His leadership philosophy is of facilitating others to realise their suggestions, believing that it's better to try and fail than to die wondering.

Success story

Not much seems to have failed, though. From a closed shop of a tight bunch of blokes, club nights are now a heaving all-grade social night, thanks to initiative from within the membership, and its convenor having been empowered to run it as she sees fit. Social team leagues are back, as are regular fitness sessions, culminating in a healthy membership growth of 100 over the last season and the most women's interclub teams being entered in the district. In 2021, visitors were particularly welcome: 3 Opens and a Doubles tournament were held, drawing participants from across the country, in no small part thanks to Martin's outreach programme (c.f. 'Nomad') and tireless work securing decent sponsorship. Regarding unfinished business, he admits to a tinge of envy in not being involved in the major capital works on which Thorndon hopes to embark, but expresses complete confidence in the steering committee's capacity to deliver. Given the long list of projects Martin has led, I feel compelled to ask if he's been served with divorce papers. Quite the contrary: he is immensely grateful to his NZ-born wife for her support and understanding of his deep involvement in squash. His squash marriage, however, has been bigamous, involving multiple partners drawn from within and without Thorndon's committee, who he insists deserve recognition.

Vorsprung durch Technik

We discuss what makes for a successful tournament as an organiser and this comes down to full draws, players coming up against new blood and matches running

HIGHLIGHT REEL

Away Tournament	Nelson Open 2021 RU Taupō, Wanaka, Kawaroa Park
Impromptu Welcome	A club in the Bay of Plenty opening its doors specially and hosting a mini-tournament during a family cycling holiday
Best match	v “Frisky”, a Marlborough junior, Nelson Open 2021
Best win	Tie – both opponents being Thorndon masters' members <i>(Answers on a postcard, readers)</i>

reasonably close to schedule. This leads us onto his gift to competitive squash – open-source software to facilitate tournament control, including messaging eligible players to fill the draw's specific needs. The software optimises the possibilities and minimises errors (“it's very German, I admit”), but crucially frees up TCs to do what they really want to do – mix with the punters on the gallery rather than be stuck on the phone finding ring-ins.

In the end

Actually there is no end, just a late middle, which will consist of Martin and his family going to back to his home town of Munich, Germany, at the end of January. As a self-employed management consultant with an international client base, there'll be minimal upheaval from a work perspective. The unknown is how well his 10- and 7-year-old girls will transition after 4 years here, but Martin's quietly optimistic of their adaptability and resilience, thanks to our education system's focus on teamwork, problem-solving and social skills.

Thorndon 2.0

As I said, there isn't really an end, not least to the squash story for Martin, as he's keen to recreate the Thorndon and Wellington community squash vibe in the more sterile squash scene of Munich. Taking over a busy racquet-sport complex close to his home is a possibility, and he's interested in seeing if the locals will buy into the prospect of squash being more than just a bare activity that ticks the 'exercise' box.

House of Pain

Anyone drawn against Martin in tournaments needn't expect any favours for old-times' sake. While overseas matches won't count for grading points, this man will be in it to win it, the notion of a "friendly" being alien. This is a legacy of youth tennis days, from which he vividly recalls "brutal" tussles with particular rivals. He almost needs my pack of tissues when recalling his worst squash loss but talk of winning and the ways and means to achieve it peps him up and prompts a wicked glint in his eye.

Talking of wickedness, I'm curious as to whether he ever pulls out his big bats from time to time. Turns out he doesn't, but that's because he much prefers the up-close-and-personal nature of squash. Close quarter observation provides fodder for out-psyching an opponent and he admits to exploiting any avenue, including wearing the club shirt of his opponent to confuse (no, Otis, it wasn't coincidence) or of the host club to win over the crowd.

The spirit of squicket

The chat is taking a rather Australian turn (although I

forget to ask if he's much of a sledger) so we revert back to home. Martin provides an uplifting description of his best on-court battle memorable for its skilful and hard-but-fair aspects. It sounds like an account of sporting contest at its purest, so I hasten to wrap up, this sort of dangerous talk keeping squash out of the Olympics. Speaking of corruption, if there's ever an opportunity to bring squash into the global sports betting phenomenon, (ooh, Khandallah 3 v Martinborough 2 in men's div 5 anyone?), Martin would surely be your go-to for execution.

For a man admitting to efficiency, precision and technology as his strongest suits, it's endearing that Martin struggles to find the words to convey the personal impact of his Wellington squash experience. It seems to boil down to friendship, fulfilment and fun and while it's too corny to tell him, this may be his most enduring legacy on the Thorndon membership's relationship with the sport.

Go well, Martin. I'm keenly awaiting an automated SMS advising that I meet the inaugural Munich International Classic's eligibility criteria.



INTERCLUB? IN SUMMER?

In response to the 2021 Masters Interclub survey, we trialed a summer season, which wrapped on Wednesday 2nd March. Maybe the bouncier ball is a little kinder to maturing joints?!

Some competitive ties were had, with Kapiti topping out the B & C grade division by just a few points over Khandallah. The D & E grade division was extremely close, with the Hutt City Marauders sailing into the sunset with the loot, one point clear of the Wainui Old Boys. Maybe there's something to be said for intimidating your opponents with a threatening team name?

Many thanks to our Interclub convenor Nicola Ward-Thomas for putting together workable draws with fairly limited numbers. Once again, let us know if you think we should keep the summer season in the calendar. Do you like that warmer court, or do you prefer to stick to the traditional seasons of autumn, winter and spring?

TAWA COURT # 4

Excellent progress is being made on the district's newest court, aka Court # 4 at Tawa Squash Club. It's great to see the court coming together, as well as the all-important seating area.



SQUASH WELLINGTON ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Squash Wellington AGM will take place at Mana Squash Club on Monday 28th March, 2022 at 6:30pm. The agenda has been sent in advance to all club committees.

COMING SOON:

10th - 12th March	Island Bay B & Below
13th March	HEAD Junior 9Hundy @ Khandallah
18th - 20th March	Wainuiomata Open
25th - 27th March	Tawa B & Below
27th March	HEAD Women's 800 @ Ōtaki
1st - 2nd April	Kāpiti Open

ADVERTISING

Want to further the reach for your business? In the SWing has a wide coverage throughout the Wellington region, and is sent to all 14 affiliated clubs, as well as being shared through social media channels. Please contact Russell to discuss advertising rates on admin@squashwellington.org.nz or 021 086 15446

6 tournaments with great prizes

HEAD 9 HUNDY & BELOW SQUASH SERIES 2022

KHANDALLAH	13th MARCH	<p>The HEAD 9 Hundy series is designed to encourage junior players into competitive tournament play.</p> <p>Entry fee: \$5 per tournament Start: 9am Matches: 3 matches per player per tournament Scoring: PAR 11, best of 3 sets</p> <p>Open to all junior players 900 grading points and below as at 13th March 2022.</p> <p>If either player is 500 points or below, a blue dot ball must be used.</p> <p>Every tournament you enter gives you a greater chance to win HEAD swag and other great prizes.</p>
ISLAND BAY	10th APRIL	
MARTINBOROUGH	8TH MAY	
TAWA	19th JUNE	
HUTT CITY	17th JULY	
MANA (Final)	28th AUGUST	

To enter each tournament go to www.squash.org.nz/sit/dashboard or contact the respective convenor listed above

Tournaments with great HEAD prizes

HEAD Women's 800 & Below squash series 2022

Ōtaki <small>Erica Hamer erica.hamersmas.co.nz</small>	Sunday 27th March	<div style="background-color: #6a3d9a; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">The HEAD womens 800</div> <p>series is designed to introduce women players to competitive tournament play. It's also a great way to learn the rules of the game to build confidence in reffing and marking games.</p> <p>Every tournament you enter gives you a greater chance to win HEAD products.</p> <p>Each player receives 5 points for entering each tournament, 1 point for each loss and 3 points for every win. (max of 14 points for each tournament).</p> <p>Entry: \$5 per tournament Games Start: 10:00am Matches: 3 matches per tournament Scoring: PAR15, best of 3 games</p>
Mana <small>Tanya Fulcher tanyafulcher@gmail.com</small>	Sunday 01st May	
Club Kelburn <small>Travis Steenskamp adminclubk.co.nz</small>	Sunday 22nd May	
Wainuiomata <small>Shelby Burns shelbybawindowslive.com</small>	Sunday 26th June	
Upper Hutt <small>Mandy Haste v8nutter.is@gmail.com</small>	Sunday 24th July	
Khandallah <small>Tracy Mears shepherdfamily@outlook.co.nz</small>	Series final Sunday 14th August	

To enter each tournament go to www.squash.org.nz/sit/dashboard