

# In the **SW**ing

Squash Wellington Newsletter

## CAN'T BEAT WELLY ON AN OPEN DAY

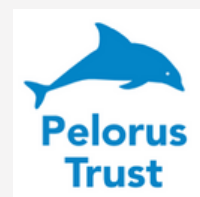
And what an Open it was - with close to 170 entries, the Wellington Open was the district's largest single-facility squash tournament for many a year. As the event has dominated our time here at Squash Wellington over the past couple of months, it also dominates these pages: we have action shots which capture a few of the intense battles witnessed on the six Hutt City courts over the weekend, and ITS reporter-at-large Catharine Sayer provides analysis of the two open division finals, as well as an in-depth interview with women's open winner Lana Harrison.

We also have a Skillsoft Master of Masters update (well, two actually, so read them in order!), SuperChamps news, and a look at some fantastic progress at a couple of our district clubs. Look out for some breaking news on the world junior front too.

**Russell Henderson - General Manager**



## Sponsors & Supporters





# PARTICIPATION

## WELLINGTON OPEN - ACTION SHOTS

With all six Hutt City courts pumping almost continuously throughout the tournament, there was a lot of action to be seen at this year's Open:





# PARTICIPATION

## WELLINGTON OPEN FINALS MATCH REPORTS

### Women's final: Lana Harrison [1] v Charlotte Galloway [3]

On a wet and windy weekend designed for squash, the Wellington Open final hosted by Hutt City Squash was contested by two Auckland-based players who had enjoyed stellar junior careers. In a re-booted senior career after a 6 year absence, Harrison's visit to the capital was on the back of leading her Remuera club to Mitchell Cup success the previous weekend and taking the Barfoot & Thompson 2022 Auckland Open PSA Challenger title as a wildcard a few weeks earlier.

Despite suffering the lingering effects of bronchitis and playing 3 tough matches in the men's Open, the 31-year-old Papakura-raised Harrison



*Lana Harrison and Charlotte Galloway pose before their match*



**Wellington Open 2022 winners Lana Harrison and Evan Williams**

prevailed over the returning local Galloway, now based in Manurewa, in an efficient three-game victory.

Turning the opponent through frequent use of the cross-court appeared to be the tactic of choice for both players at the outset, but Galloway struggled for accuracy and scored more tins than nicks to gift Harrison a 11-5 early lead.

Galloway, searching without joy for length, found herself in retrieval mode in the second game. With one eye on the flight schedule, Harrison wasted no chances to take it in a punishing 11-2 score line.

While Galloway appeared more settled in the third game and was starting to find her range, Harrison's strong volley kills paid dividends and a healthy 11-6 score line ensued.

"Good fun," was Harrison's succinct verdict; when pressed to elaborate she graciously credited her on-court freshness to a seeding mix-up in the men's draw that ensured avoidance of a tough contest with her brother and long-standing rival Josh.

# PARTICIPATION



***Benjamin Ratcliffe takes on Evan Williams in the Wellington Open 2022 final***

## Men's final: Evan Williams [1] v Benjamin Ratcliffe [2]

The knowledgeable Wellington squash crowd was treated to a trans-Tasman clash for the Men's Open title, in which Benjamin Ratcliffe of Victoria, Australia took on the host club's Evan Williams.

By contrast to the women's final, both players showed greater willingness to play a line and length game and found their targets early. Despite a 200-place gulf in the professional rankings, the higher seeded Williams, keen to win a record tenth title, looked rattled at times as Ratcliffe conjured attacking winners out of scraps.

Impressive movement was on display from both players, Ratcliffe's in particular drawing gasps from the onlookers.

While points-trading characterised the early and middle stages of each game, Williams's greater experience and superior touch on the drop allowed him to close out the back end of each. No show boater, Williams will nevertheless have enjoyed his cross-court volley nick to take the match on the first of his four match balls, giving a workmanlike win in three, 11-9, 11-8, 11-6.

Ratcliffe provided a good stern test for Williams in preparation for next week's Central Open PSA Challenger \$6K tour event in Whanganui. That event will see Williams square off with the Waikato's Chileshe brothers for the first time in a year. After their Manchester-based stint peppered with North Western and Yorkshire League appearances and various northern hemisphere PSA Satellite and Challenger tournaments, it will be interesting to see whether Williams can reassert his domestic dominance of 2021.

It was an emotional Williams who addressed the audience post-match, acknowledging their support in wake of his non-selection for the Commonwealth Games. Revealing that he still has hunger for success, and putting retirement rumours to bed with his expectation to return next year, he emphasised to his many coaching charges the importance of demonstrating resilience in adversity.

Articulate as always, and careful to thank organisers for the little bells and whistles that make the tournament his favourite, Evan won over any neutrals in the audience by making a heartfelt declaration of his depth of attachment for the title.

***Catharine Sayer***

# PARTICIPATION

## SKILLSOFT MASTER OF MASTERS SERIES

### Round Two - Wainuiomata

The second round of the series was held on the 13th-14th May at the Wainuiomata Squash club, it was well attended with some intense games. Our thanks to Abode Air Conditioning for supporting the tournament.

Congratulations to Gary Aukett and Jeanne Yells for winning their respective Open finals for the second round in a row! The points thus far are:

Women - Jeanne Yells, after her 2 round wins and maximum points, is now the clear leader with Alissha Canning in 2nd place and Gabriela Gonzalez close behind in 3rd. Diane Cardell is not far behind the top 3.

Men - Another round win for Gary Aukett also gives him the clear lead. James Poskitt moves into 2nd with Matthew Leahy very close behind him.

### Round Three - Tawa

The third round of the series was held at Tawa on 27th-29th May, and as usual Tawa put on an awesome tournament. There was lots of great free food and Saturday night entertainment. The squash was not half bad either! We saw some epic games/rallies, long 5 setters and, unfortunately, a couple of injuries. As a result, some overall standings have changed.....

**skillsoft**

Women - Jeanne Yells solidified her standing in first place with another 3 match win, however Alissha Canning stayed close on her heels and keeps the pressure on with a 3 match win also. Points-wise Jeanne has 47, with Alissha on 43 and Gabriela Gonzalez close behind in 3rd with 37 points.

Men - With Gary Aukett doing baby birthday duties that left a big opportunity for James Poskitt and Matt Leahy (aka Mad Dog) to try and put a points gap on Gary, which they duly did. Both James and Matt had 2-1 wins which moved them ahead of Gary. James now leads with 37 points, with Matt very close behind on 35 and Gary close behind on 33.

With two rounds to go - the Wellington Masters (hosted by Island Bay) in mid-July, and Kapiti in late August - the points race is shaping up to have a very close finish.

**Bryan Smith**

**SQUASH WELLINGTON** **skillsoft**

**MASTERS of MASTERS SERIES**

**ANY GRADE PLAYER COULD BE CROWNED A CHAMP!**

**FIVE QUALIFYING TOURNAMENTS**

- Wairarapa (@ Redstar) April 8-10th (double entry points)
- Wainuiomata May 13-15th
- Tawa May 27-29th
- Wellington (@ Island Bay) July 15-17th
- Kapiti August 19th-21st

**MEN'S & WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS**  
(CROWNED AT SQUASH WGTN AWARDS)

ENTER VIA SQUASH for each individual club




FOR ANY DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT [BRYAN.SMITH@DRAGONFIREMGMT.CO.NZ](mailto:BRYAN.SMITH@DRAGONFIREMGMT.CO.NZ)



# PARTICIPATION

## SUPERCHAMPS

Following a flurry of activity, the 9th June grading cut-off has now passed, and teams and clubs around the district will be setting their sights on the district competition, to be held on the weekend of 29th–31st July. If you're keen to play, and haven't yet joined a team at your club, ask around before it's too late! After last year's cancellation of National Superchamps, the prospect of heading off to nationals is even more exciting this year. For more information, key dates, and links to rules, head to [squashwellington.org.nz/superchamps/](http://squashwellington.org.nz/superchamps/)

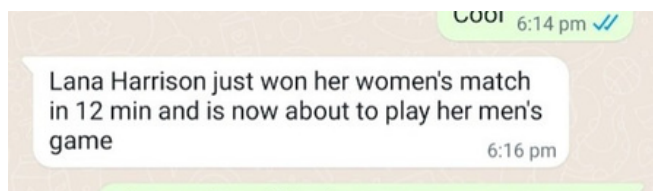
 <b>SUPERCHAMPS 2022</b> <b>Key Dates &amp; Info</b>		
Date	Action	By Whom
<b>Thursday 09 June</b>	<b>Player Transfer &amp; Results Deadline</b> Intended player moves completed via iSquash by this date All Interclub results from this week must be entered in iSquash. Note: Wellington Open results will not be entered until after 10 June as the tournament is not scheduled to finish until after cut off. See Rule 2.2.3	<b>Clubs</b>
<b>Friday 10 June</b>	<b>National Grading List Run</b> Grading Lists run by SNZ and uploaded to SNZ website to determine player eligibility	
<b>Saturday 11 June</b>	<b>National Grading List Distributed</b> Grading list and team entry forms distributed to all Club Captains	
<b>Sunday 03 July</b>	<b>Team Deadline</b> All team lists must be submitted on the correct entry forms. In fairness to all clubs that do meet this deadline, <b>no exceptions</b> will be made for any late entries.	<b>Clubs</b>
<b>Sunday 10 July</b>	<b>Draws Distributed</b> Draws will be sent to all Team Managers, who have just under two weeks to submit any protests	
<b>Friday 22 July</b>	<b>Team Protest Deadline</b> Any protests must be emailed to SW General Manager and received <b>by 5pm</b> . <a href="mailto:admin@squashwellington.org.nz">admin@squashwellington.org.nz</a>	<b>Team Managers</b>
<b>Friday 29 July</b>	<b>Competition Begins:</b> <b>B Grade – Tawa</b> <b>C Grade – Khandallah</b> <b>D Grade – Wainuiomata</b> <b>E Grade – Upper Hutt</b>	
<b>Rules &amp; Disputes</b> Superchamps rules are available on the <a href="#">Squash NZ website here</a> . The Disputes Committee shall consist of the Tournament Director, and two other people. The Disputes Committee shall rule on any protests made by teams/players in accordance with the SuperChamps National Club Graded Championship Rules. Their decision will be final.		

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Lana Harrison – on her own terms

#### **Twelve minutes**

I'm packing my gear bag for my opening game of the Wellington Open in the lofty heights of Women's Div 3 when this message from a startled spectator comes through:



He doesn't know I've been assigned the job of crafting a feature article about her at short notice, so the intel is welcome, although fearsome. Just how good is this lady? Have the Commonwealth Games selectors missed something?

#### **Players must mark and referee the following game**

Lana Harrison likes to fly under the radar, so much so that on arrival I have trouble locating her. I get a clue of the circles she's flown in when, after bumping into Evan Williams's mother, I get introduced to her mother, Kim. The two matriarchs being deep in conversation is a hint that their offspring might've reached the same lofty heights at around the same time. Most surprisingly, Kim identifies Lana to me as the slight blonde refereeing on the adjacent court. Refereeing? Clearly Lana's missed the memo that slinking off and avoiding reffing duty is the unofficial perk of reaching A-grade, at least in these parts, to the disgust of the wannabes who have to plug the gaps.

#### **First rodeo**

Endearingly, Harrison's bemused to be approached, admitting to not having been interviewed before and wondering what she can possibly say of interest to the Wellington squash

the Wellington squash whānau. I don't mention our extensive international readership (*Martin Krafft in Germany? – Ed.*) in case she takes fright and bails. Lining up time for a chat is tricky since she's in town to play both the women's and men's open divisions and on-court engagements take priority, not forgetting those important reffing stints, of course.

When we finally meet, tucked in the corner of the indoor cricket nets at Hutt City, Lana is happy to talk in a no-holds barred fashion. There are no "off the record" restrictions, despite her story being a powerful critique of the high-performance system on which several of her rivals depend.



**Lana Harrison warming up for the Wellington Open 2022 final**

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### ***How the good times rolled***

Harrison's been head-hunted for this comp on the back of a stellar senior record in the last 18 months, but her journey to success has been far from linear. She speaks fondly of a youth framed entirely by squash people, events and milestones. The Papakura squash community in which she grew up was nurturing and culminated in Lana winning national junior titles at every age group.

*"I loved squash; squash stuff was my life. While friends went on holidays, trips to squash tournaments were what my family did and I loved it."*

Junior success culminated in national representative honours, twice going to the biennial World Junior Teams competition, first in Hong Kong (2007) then Chennai, India (2009). Her contemporaries were Joelle King in Hong Kong then Megan Graham (née Craig), Amanda Landers-Murphy and Emma Millar for the Indian campaign. Her proudest squash moment dates from that period, being her clinching bronze for New Zealand v Hong Kong on their soil in a brutal 5-setter.

Once a senior and after committing to the pro squash tour, Harrison achieved strong enough results in Oceania and Malaysian tournaments to achieve a top 100 ranking fairly swiftly.

### ***Things happen in threes***

If it all sounds too good to be true, it was.

*"I'm not religious or particularly superstitious, but I'm a firm believer in things happening in threes, good or bad. In and around 2011, it was three horrendous things."*

Harrison explains that her world came crashing down as a 20-year-old when suffering a skull fracture after fainting, from which she was concussed for nine months, a stress fracture in her rib and an ankle reconstruction. Rehabilitation from the ankle surgery was complex and slow. Unable to play for 18 months, Harrison spiralled into self-doubt, lack of motivation and deeper mental health issues. Worse, support from the national body was lacking. She felt,

*"cast out; I was surplus to requirements. The [high performance] circus had moved on to the next crop of players who could perform in the here and now. The system wasn't set up to nurture players experiencing setbacks."*

Echoing the global phenomenon of young athletes focussed solely on sporting excellence breaking down psychologically when injured – referred to as "identity capture" – Harrison talks candidly at how she was bereft of capacity to envisage better days. A hard exit from the squash world – her only world – ensued.

*"I got rid of all my gear, didn't go near the club, didn't see any of the members and my friends – my only friends. I broke off from it all."*

Surely such a drastic move was hard?

*"Of course it was. But squash didn't really care about me, well the high performance system didn't anyway. I was a really strongly motivated player, wanting to improve and enjoying training, but got all sorts of mixed messages from a high performance coach about how much training I needed to be doing and how much I should be refuelling. I was over-worked at times by a high performance coach who told me I needed to get my A into G. Later, after I'd developed disordered eating patterns, I was criticised for having lost too*



## FEATURE ARTICLE

*much weight. None of the advice was consistent and left me confused and ill.”*

We talk about how she may have slipped into to what’s now known as relative energy deficiency in sport or “RED-S”. It’s the result of long-term imbalance between the calorific intake of elite athletes and the energy required to support the heavy training load. At the time, Harrison and other development and elite athletes had no access to sports nutritionists. Instead, they were at the mercy of the scraps of knowledge, or simply personal theories, of their technical coaches, whose capabilities were best confined to swing technique, ghosting patterns and match tactics. Athlete wellbeing matters were well outside the coach’s wheelhouse and in many respects, as Harrison sees it, not much has changed.

### **Lack of progress**

Given the glacial pace of change in athlete support systems, Harrison isn’t surprised at New Zealand’s failure to sustain its talent base. She reflects on the promise of her 2007 world bronze-winning junior team and her expectation at that time that it would be a springboard to growth in strength and depth for NZ squash.

*“I look at the experience of both world junior teams consisting of players like Joelle, Amanda, Emma, Megan and me and wonder where the next group was coming from. That was back in 2007 and 2009 and there hasn’t been a group like us since then, just the odd individual like Kaitlyn [Watts, world no. 98]. Obviously, Joelle and Amanda kicked on, but where was the next cohort of juniors coming up? It’s really sad. I’ve been winning a few tournaments and can’t believe how well I’m playing but then wonder whether the standard has actually regressed back to when I was twenty.”*

### **Three is the magic number**

Ah yes, winning tournaments. There are some gaps to fill here. After five or so “really dark years” between 2011 – 2016, the birth of Harrison’s son Jack in 2016 was a turning point, being a bright light at the end of the proverbial dark tunnel. With the mental health issues lifting, three events signalled to Harrison that squash warranted another try.

First, while driving on the motorway, she spotted in the adjoining lane her old practice partner Alex Grayson, back in the country for a few weeks. Next, she ran into Shelley Kitchen and her child at a playground “out west”. Third, she saw Craig Stratford, a personal sponsor from the old days, on a Texaco forecourt in Howick. Before she had chance to object, Stratford had sorted her out with shoes and a racquet.

Jumping on court with no expectations, Harrison rekindled her competitive instinct *“straight away; but I nearly died the first couple of outings”*. Remuera Racquets Club, to which she’d moved at age 15 after her start at Papakura, quickly rustled up a membership package and welcomed her back warmly.

In 2019 she entered the Auckland Open to test the waters and lost to Abbie Palmer in the semis. Just a few months later, she entered nationals and saw off Kaitlyn Watts in the quarters before succumbing in the semis to Amanda Landers-Murphy, then 38 in the world and tour-hardened, 11-9 in the fifth. This accomplishment renewed her self-belief. Sponsorship from Head was also not far behind, for which she is hugely grateful.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### System of a down

While Harrison is relishing playing at the highest domestic level, she's staying clear of the high performance system and the pro tour.

*"As a funded athlete, you're constantly stressed by feeling obliged to be meeting the funders' expectations, even though they often don't fit with your needs. Having a son means I can't be on the tour, I have no need to pay my 250 euros to be a registered PSA player and I don't get caught up in high performance systems."*

Harrison doesn't spend her time reflecting on systemic problems. She reserves her care and reflection for the current crop of players showing promise and has wisdom to impart should they seek it. Their need to "play the system" to access funding and support or risk being on the outer is a threat to the development of talented players, she feels. They're also highly vulnerable, she claims, to selection processes lacking in transparency.

### Ladies in the kitchen

We don't get bogged down in the serious stuff, far from it. As we talk about winning, she lets slip the funny side to being ingrained in the club tournament circuit and its traditions. I learn that on the eve of her brother's nuptials, he insisted on maintaining the Kiwi tradition of taking on one's siblings at every opportunity. Despite Josh, a handy B1, having been prescribed a dose of confidence for his big day, his sister went off-script and took the contest in a tight fifth. Stepping off court, the Harrison Cup secured once more, she immediately launched into a post-tournament winner's speech in front of the assembled whānau, the autopilot kicking in as the TC, bar staff and her trusty sponsors, Head and the Remuera club, received their customary acknowledgements.

Keeping it light, I throw her a list of choices to pick from – see highlighted box – but we come unstuck when I demand her preference between a triple feint and a corkscrew. Trick shots don't seem to be a thing in Papakura.

*"I sometimes play a high wall boast – is that a corkscrew?", she asks before revealing – opponents take note – that she's "only just learnt to drop – a drop feels like a trick shot to me!"*

### Harrison 2.0

Having dumped the previous over-engineered hard drive, Harrison credits her success this time around to a far simpler operating system:

*"Winning comes from having fun and not taking yourself too seriously. I train and compete when I want these days. It's on my terms. I've grown up, matured, found my voice and have the confidence to ask questions."*

The sustainability of her success seems assured with her new sense of agency and control, taking to the court when and with whom she wants (generally Stratford, now her life as well as hitting partner).

The pleasure she gets from squash stems from being a fit, healthy and happy role model to her son. And on that note, she politely makes her excuses and scuttles away for her semi-final.

**Catharine Sayer**

Dancefloor	V	Karaoke
Beach	V	Bush
Take out	V	Eat in
Movies	V	Netflix
Tea	V	Coffee

## DEVELOPMENT

### Squash New Zealand Regional Coaching Forum

The coaching forums continued this month, with a Lower North Island Forum held at SquashGym Palmerston North on Sunday 29th May. This was an opportunity for coaches to connect, and share knowledge and experience. Great to see some Wellington-based coaches make the trip up to Palmy for the day.

For more coaching resources (among other squash-related learning), head to [www.squashsmart.co.nz/](http://www.squashsmart.co.nz/). It's free to register and use, and new courses are being added all the time.



**Coaches.. assemble!!**



**Sign up - it's free!**

### World Juniors Squad

Among the group of 12 NZ junior players who have been selected to compete in the 2022 WSF World Junior Squash Championship are two Wellington players – Oliver Dunbar and Maiden-Lee Coe. It is the first time in 3 years a junior team has travelled after Covid-19 issues disrupted tournaments in 2020 and 2021.

The event, which will feature a junior men's and women's individual competition and the men's junior team championships, will be hosted in the city of Nancy between 11–21 August. Oliver is junior men's team reserve, and also one of two junior men playing in the individual event. Maiden-Lee will play as one of six selected for the junior women's event.

The junior women are coached by two former professional international players; Emma Millar and Tamsyn Leevey. Coaches for the junior men are Manu Yam and Nic Dann.



**Oliver Dunbar**



**Maiden-Lee Coe**



# CLUB CAPABILITY

## Kāpiti Upgrades

With help from club sponsor Sharp (NZ), Kāpiti installed electronic scoring on all three courts. This was completed in time for their scheduled KSRC Open, which unfortunately had to be postponed due to a number of key committee members contracting COVID. A new date will be announced shortly. It wasn't just the inside of the club having a makeover, as the club rooms received a fresh paint job, and the carpark got seriously smoothed over.



## Tawa Court Four

Recent updates from Tawa included below. As you can see, this is really taking shape now – it even looks like a squash court!



# JUNE TOURNAMENTS

## Coming up..

Khandallah Open	17-19 June
HEAD 9Hundy @ Tawa	19 June
Upper Hutt Open	24-26 June
Matariki Māori Poipatu @Otaki	25 June
HEAD 800 @ Wainuiomata	26 June
Island Bay Open	30 June – 2 July
Masterton July Open	1-2 July
Hutt City Open	8-10 July
Wellington Masters	15-17 July