

In the **Swing**

Squash Wellington Newsletter

B-ING THE BEST!

Big and bigger efforts from some of our district's B graders who took home the silverware at National SuperChamps; aptly battled out on the brand new Court Four at Tawa. Congratulations to Tawa Women's and Thorndon Men's teams on their sensational efforts. More info and pics in this issue, as well as a wrap up of this year's HEAD 9Hundy junior series, and the Masters National Teams event.

The coming weeks see the winding down of the singles season, as we enter a period of doubles tournaments, but there's still plenty happening, with the NZ Junior Individuals and Teams from next weekend at Hutt City, and the Squash Wellington Awards and World Squash Day the following weekend.

This issue also sees ITS star reporter Catharine Sayer tackle the subject of women's health in squash; an area which is finally seeing more dialogue, and needs to be more conspicuous if we are to continue to grow the game for women and girls.

Russell Henderson, SW General Manager



Sponsors & Supporters



PARTICIPATION

Junior HEAD9HUNDY Final @ Mana

After six tournaments in this seasons series, the winner has been crowned.

Congratulations to the series winner **Connor Keall** from **Wainuiomata**. The final was a family affair between Connor and his older brother Flynn. It was a nailbiter final going to 5 sets with the younger Keall taking the bragging rights.

There must be something in the water over the hill in Wainui taking Winner and Runner-Up placings for both Boys and Girls. Final placings were:

Girls:

Chelsea Barnett - Wainuiomata

Bonnie-Lee Nicholas - Wainuiomata

Greer Gibbs - Kāpiti

Boys:

Connor Keall - Wainuiomata

Flynn Keall - Wainuiomata

Jake Richardson - Upper Hutt



Series winner Connor Keall with Stu Demler from Mana

Our thanks to all the amazing players who have taken part in the series, and all our fabulous host clubs and the teams of volunteers who get behind the day.

Our biggest thanks go out to our sponsor @sportcoltd for their continued support of this event through the awesome @headsquash_official merchandise.

If your club would like to host a tournament next season, reach out to Russell at admin@squashwellington.org.nz.



PARTICIPATION

NATIONAL SUPERCHAMPS WRAP

Congratulations to the newly crowned National B Grade champions, Tawa Women and Thorndon men.

Both teams went into the event as 2nd seeds and played some phenomenal squash to take finish at the top of the podium.

Congratulations Champions!!

Big thanks to Aaron Havill, Chris Sinclair and the team of volunteers at Tawa Squash Club. A massive weekend with loads of great feedback from players and visitors. Well done!

Shout out to all the other teams that competed across NZ. There were some very close matches with some great wins and super close loses.

Overall, from the posts across social media, teams had a great time representing their clubs and district. If there's one thing, we do well it's celebrate. Top marks to the Martinborough team for taking out the costume award with their vineyard inspired ensemble.



Tawa B Grade Women



Martinborough E Grade Women



Thorndon B Grade Women

Final placings

B Grade

Tawa Women - 1st

Thorndon Men - 1st

Thorndon Women - 5th

C grade

Thorndon Women - 4th

Upper Hutt Men - 6th

D grade

Kāpiti Women - 6th

Thorndon Men - 5th

E grade

Martinborough Women - 5th

Mana Men - 7th

FEATURE ARTICLE

Women's health and squash

This month, In the SWing reporter Catharine Sayer asks whether we're missing a participation trick by carefully avoiding discussion of the obvious when thinking about ways to grow the participation of girls and women in our sport.

Big red splash

Lydia Ko recently hit the headlines internationally for citing period-related back pain as a cause of discomfort during a golf tournament, this headline being in the UK daily The Guardian, published on 3 May 2022.

'That time of the month': golfer Lydia Ko stuns reporter after talking about period

- New Zealander lauded for candour about tight back on course
- 'I know you're at a loss for words, Jerry,' she tells interviewer



A couple of excellent local pieces on the rarity of sportswomen openly discussing the issue swiftly followed:

Lydia Ko kicks off conversation about periods in sport / RNZ;

Lydia Ko winning followers with period talk / RNZ News

Their newsworthiness can be wholly ascribed to menstruation still being taboo almost everywhere except behind changing room doors, and not always there either; the rarity of elite athletes discussing the effect of women's health issues on performance makes

any offhand comment they do make a big splash.

Recipes and shopping

A trawl of Dr Google's archives for female squash players commenting on the influence of women's health issues on their game brought up a handful of butternut squash recipes and patented natural formulations guaranteed to relieve pre-menstrual symptoms. Good to know.

There was one recent article however, on the decision of Scottish Squash to distribute menstrual products to 22 clubs in Scotland to avoid period poverty being a barrier to young female participation. Interestingly, the article quoted New Zealand's ex-international player Kylie Lindsay, now Senior Performance Coach for Scottish Squash, on the effect of menstruation on training and performance. Check it out:

Period poverty - Scottish Squash's mission to raise awareness and tackle a taboo - Scottish Squash

While high performance sports institutes are slowly getting to grips with the influence of women's health issues on training loads, timing and performance, the cupboard seems to be bare in relation to squash specifically. Elite women squash players coming through those kind of institutes – few given the increasing influence of the US collegiate system on the professional squash player production line – are likely to have to rely on expertise handed down from richer sports that can afford research funding.

But what about at grassroots level: could accounting for women's health not only be highly relevant to our participation targets but also to the design of our competition frameworks?

We're Kiwis; we're staunch

Competitive squash is a sport of commitment whose participants are generally wary of letting down their interclub team or opponents in the tournament draw by withdrawing through illness or injury. In such cases, players usually go to extremes to explain the malady or

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injury for fear of being judged unreliable or soft. Until the advent of Covid, players would try to play through colds caught at the last minute or during a tournament, despite the risk of losing points. The fear of being labelled irresponsible for infecting others was vastly outweighed by the risk of annoying skippers or TCs needing to do a last-minute ring-around.

However there's an unspoken rule in grassroots women's squash that women's health issues are never cited as the reason for withdrawal, unavailability or poor performance. The show must go on.

Parental advisory: explicit content

Let's be frank about what women's health issues we're talking about: pregnancy, miscarriage, menopause, lumpectomies and that wonderful catch-all term for a range of discomfort: menstrual matters, or to use the socially-acceptable, less icky euphemism, the time of the month.

Ground-truthing

In a recent survey of women squashies in our district^[1] through the medium of the Capital Ladies of Squash forum, 52% of players felt that women's health issues had affected their competitive play and 42% felt that in hindsight, they'd played matches they shouldn't have for those reasons.

Unsurprisingly, 39% of players reported that women's health affected their enjoyment of the game. 18% of players reported not entering interclub or tournaments owing to uncertainty as to whether they would be affected by their health. Most astonishingly, 41% of players have kept quiet about a women's health issue that kept them out of an event or having caused them to pull out, 17% of them having cited an entirely false reason.

Unpicking this data, we see that women's health issues are a real factor in women's competitive unavailability. While there's a culture of secrecy, our women don't

[1] 56 respondents

particularly want it that way: 70% of players felt that there was not a culture of open dialogue about women's health in the squash scene, of which all bar one supported a shift.

Solutions

The best boss I ever had advised me that the best employees he ever had were those who brought him solutions alongside problems. There's no performance bonus for writing a perfectly formed article, or any article at all, but you catch my drift.

#itsmymove

In setting participation targets, administrators should be realistic that women's health issues will make competitive participation rates lower than those of men, alternatively treat competitive and casual participation taken together as the best measure of women's participation. Admittedly, measuring casual play rates will be more difficult without iSquash as the single source of the truth.

However, a change in approach may better reflect the spread of playing formats truly relevant to what women want from squash. The queens of our courts – backed by national campaigns to get more women and girls active – surely warrant a more sophisticated and flexible approach to measuring their participation.

Culture

Given the evidence that women would prefer to break the taboo of silence on women's health, being more overtly respectful of how women are feeling may make them feel more comfortable in the squash scene. For those of us at the truly, madly, deeply end of the “try it, play it, love it” spectrum, why wouldn't we take every opportunity to expand the gene pool to include those for whom this issue matters?

During the 2022 D-grade Superchamps weekend, three women from three different clubs related –unprompted – how even the survey itself has facilitated women starting the conversation about this topic. One club in

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the district bucks the trend and already talks about women's health, having its own in-house code word that explains everything and nothing, depending on who needs to know.

Practically speaking, team skippers can set the tone by stipulating at the beginning of the competition that women's health issues are not "excuses" but bona fide reasons to pull out that don't need to be covered up by less sensitive explanations.

TCs can show understanding by being comfortable with the women's health reason cited by women if they choose to cite it and not pressing women for reasons when they do not. With a high rate of women already playing through women's health issues, a sudden cultural shift to a floodgate of women making bogus reasons for withdrawal and collapsing the very fabric of interclub or tournaments is remote.

Not playing for points

The district survey tested another solution, one for the women whose issue is sufficient to hamper their performance but not restrict them playing altogether: not playing for points.

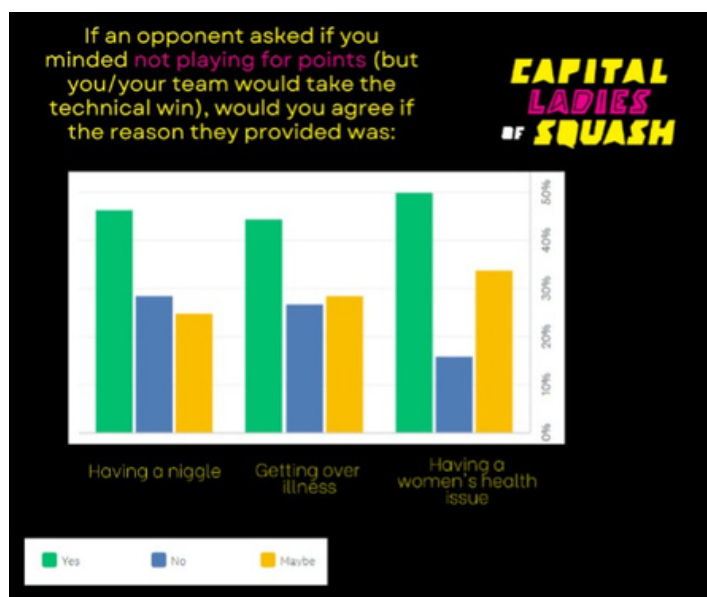
This solution met with broad favour, only 16% opposing it, 50% in favour and 34% uncertain.

The beauty of this solution is that it needs no administrative oversight or shift in playing structures; the playing opponents simply sort it out between themselves with the requester bearing the risk of the opponent declining the invitation.

More surprisingly, the respondents were also broadly accepting of the same solution for opponents carrying a niggle and getting over illness, demonstrating that, on the whole, women are keen to support participation and inclusivity at the expense of self-promotion.

Changing playing formats

The first of these solutions is easy: reduce Interclub



teams to three players. If club captains kept the same number of women in each team (5-6 being typical), this downsizing may encourage the almost 1 in 5 women who avoid competition owing to uncertainty about their health to enter after all, aware that there are others likely to be able to fill in in case of withdrawal.

The second suggestion concerning tournaments is trickier, since it introduces more uncertainty to entrants albeit providing organisers with a pre-ordained pool of fill-ins: continue with the typical division of players into pools of 8 or 6, but make draws of only 6 or 4 – the playing 6 or 4 drawn at random with the unlucky 2 spares per division kept in the event of pull-outs.

The benefit of this arrangement is that women would receive greater confidence that pulling out when necessary would not let others down. At worst, a tournament would see a quarter of women entrants missing out, but draws contracting from 8 to 6 and 6 to 4 occur frequently enough in any event. At best, it avoids women playing through pain and discomfort that our survey tells us they do and regret later.

When road tested in our survey, 57% of women agreed with the concept, 25% opposed and 18% were uncertain. It's not a perfect solution, given that many

WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY - YOUR COMMENTS

I feel like we could talk about it, I just don't think it's come up enough to discuss since I started playing squash more seriously. We discuss other health issues with no problem though.

I feel in our club, you get to know others and become friends etc, we openly discuss if we're having a mental health day/issues and it's great to talk about it. Also with menstruating, this is also openly talked about, because I suppose we all go through it at some point and some are at different stages etc. We actually call it  and immediately know what the other is talking about 😊

Women's health should be promoted more - the more people can talk about it, the more they can find support systems. I find openness about this also has a flow on effect to how coaches and others who may not be as aware of it treat athletes.

LET'S TALK

I think it's possible to talk to those you know well, but not everyone

I didn't mention what I was going through as didn't want to be a sore loser! Haha

Development of a good and honest culture would be vital to ensure people are genuine in terms of pulling out of tournaments and interclub

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(cont. from p.6)

prefer certainty at the time of entering a tournament. However, the positive indication in response to what was a very raw proposition is encouraging. Indeed, helpful suggestions were made, such as guaranteeing out-of-towners a place in the draw and otherwise only using women willing to be used as fill-ins in that role, where willingness can be indicated at the point of registration.

So where to?

To the Capital Ladies of Squash who participated in the survey: bravo. Keep up the kōrero back at your clubs. If there's significant appetite for change, bring your thoughts back to Squash Wellington.

To the men and women wondering what this has got to do with them, let's be a district that explores and embraces opportunities to improve experiences for everyone, even if it means talking openly about issues that make us feel uncomfortable, that we worry will make others feel uncomfortable or on which we're afraid to be judged for raising.

To the (male) team manager and coach duo who maintained their cool during a certain Superchamps Nationals when phoned in the supermarket by 7 women screeching "super", "wings" and "with applicator", and returned with assorted items not for a barbecue but from the "feminine protection" aisle, we salute you.

Catharine Sayer



COMPETITIONS

NZ MASTERS INTER-DISTRICTS TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP WRAP

Event summary by Bryan Smith, Masters Convenor

Following 3 days of intensive individual games the Teams event kicked off on Monday 12th October.

Having spent the best part of 4 months training together, the team vibe was at a high, which was no surprise given this is what they had been working towards.

Starting off as 6th seed the team drew a very strong Canterbury team, #3 to kick off the campaign.

As expected, a tough tie but this is what Nationals is all about. Despite the eventual overall loss, there were some incredibly close matches with only Jeanne clocking the only win for the team.

Round 2 found us in the Plate draw and up against 7th seed Otago. The team had a very good result taking the tie 8/4 with all wins secured in 3.

Next up were #4 seeds Southland for the Plate final. With some cunning team tactics in player line-up, the team started the last round with amazing focus and strength.

First up was Alf and Geordie and while both matches were a lost, they played exceptionally well against higher graded players.

Next up was Cheryl and Lee-Ann, both played out of

their skins with Cheryl winning and Lee-Ann just missing out.

With the tie score 1/3 to Southland, Gary and Evan took to the courts and completely dominated their opponents and taking straight set wins...tie score 3/3.

Continuing the winning streak, Michelle and Matt won their matches convincingly which left the team with one hand on the Plate final, 5/3. Captain Fantastic, Tim Seymour was up next and against a much higher graded player, A1 in fact! It was a great battle, very almost causing an upset, alas not to be yet epic to say the least!

Two games left, Jeanne and Alissha with Jeanne taking the final dub to secure the Plate final, and Alissha almost causing another upset.

Overall, the team ended their campaign by improving on their seeding, 5th overall which was fantastic. I was extremely proud of the team's spirit, togetherness and attitude. Everyone played their part, fought hard and gave it everything! You can't ask for more than that!

Big thanks to coach Matt Green and our invaluable Captains, Tim Seymour and Margaret Harlen. Also massive thanks to Squash Wellington and A-Z Flooring for their support, and all those who contributed to the team fundraising.



COMPETITIONS



*Congratulations to debutants
(L-R)*

*Lee-Ann Du Toit, Alissha
Canning, Evan Michelson,
Cheryl Sullivan*



*Team function, theme
Commonwealth Games.
#athletes*



*Our thanks to our squad and rep
team sponsor
A-Z Flooring.*

CLUB CAPABILITY AND NEWS

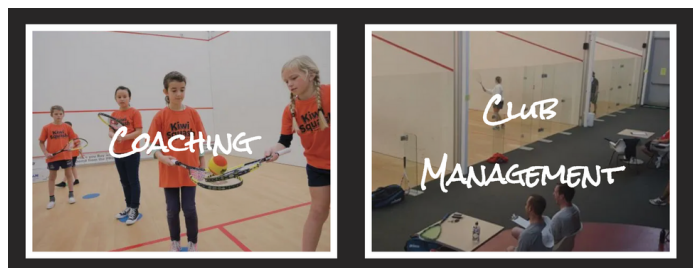
SQUASH SMART IS A GO!

If you haven't yet checked it out, it's time to get on Squash Smart - Squash NZ's free online training platform. New courses are being added all the time, and you can record your progress to give you a real sense of achievement.

An example of a recent addition is the Skill Learning coaching course, which is being followed up with a real-life person coaching course (see flyer in a couple of pages time)!



And it's not just coaching resources; there are really useful practical courses that all clubs will find helpful, such as grant funding. Head to www.squashsmart.co.nz and sign up today!



WORLD SQUASH DAY 2022

Coming up on Saturday, 15 October (or Saturday, October 15 if you're in the USA) is this year's World Squash Day, and with it, an amazing opportunity to raise awareness of, and money for, mental health charities. The motto this year is ***"Reconnecting with the people and places that lift you up"***, and once again, the nominated charity is the Mental Health Foundation (mentalhealth.org.nz).

Last year, squash clubs around Aotearoa raised over \$20,000 by participating in such fundraising activities as squash marathons, playing in fancy dress, and participating in fun squash-based games such as hitting balls into buckets.

To get involved, head to the Squash NZ website: squashnz.co.nz/events/national-events/world-squash-day.cfm and sign your club up if you haven't done so already.



CLUB CAPABILITY AND NEWS

TAWA OPENS COURT FOUR!

Words kindly supplied by Peter Bowers, Tawa Club Manager.

For the first time in over 30 years, a new club squash court has been opened in the Wellington region for the purpose of increasing capacity.

A wonderful opening, co-ordinated by Nicola Ward-Thomas on Sunday 28th August, saw 100 invitees enjoy the accolades bestowed upon the key people who made this happen, none more so than Geordie Grieve, whose commitment to this project included significant sacrifices, and the history of Tawa Squash was explained with much interest by Mike Slape, Life Member and past President of Tawa Squash. Stu Davenport rounded things off with a short, sharp, witty speech, finishing with a huge compliment advising that many clubs get hung up on talking, planning, and doing nothing while Tawa Squash “just does things.”

The ribbon was cut jointly by Kim Grieve, wife of Geordie and architect of the original concept plans, and Liz Sutton, daughter of Mervin Kemp, Mayor of Tawa in 1975 who donated the council land to the new Squash Club.



This was followed by the first game – played by the Leggett brothers, Tyler and Bayley, followed by another couple of short exhibition games before the club embarked on an open day.

The 2 highlights of the project were undoubtedly:

1. The commitment of the project lead, Geordie Grieve who upheld his promise when elected President in 2019 to build a new court which he did on budget during extremely challenging times; and
2. The generosity of those we reached out to for donations, in particular our current members. This provided us with over \$130,000 in cash while also providing an estimated \$40,000 worth of product, expertise and labour.

The court has also attracted another sponsor to the club, Morrison Kent Lawyers, whose support the club is extremely grateful for.

The opening was followed 3 weeks later by hosting the B Grade Superchamps National Finals with the Tawa B Grade Women's team taking out the women's trophy. There is no doubt the new facility helped them allowing a healthy home crowd to build up during the final providing constant applause when the girls came off the court, and even between games.

This incessant clapping remained until the girls were out of sight and halfway down the hallway to receive advice between games from the team manager, and the clapping and cheering started again as they re-emerged for their next game. It was an atmosphere to behold and already, after just 2 weeks, Court 4 is showing plenty of its true value.



Liz Sutton & Kim Grieve

CLUB CAPABILITY AND NEWS

Skill Learning Coaching Course

We are lucky to have Jason Fletcher, Squash NZ Coach Development Leader, coming to Mana Racquets Squash Club on Sunday 16 October to work with coaches from the Wellington district. Jason (or 'Fletch', as you may know him) is working hard to ensure that opportunities are there for squash coaches throughout NZ to continue developing their skills.

The course is free, and designed as a practical follow-up to the online Skill Learning course on Squash Smart (see info a couple of pages back). If you are interested in attending, please register by emailing Russell Henderson on admin@squashwellington.org.nz.



SKILL LEARNING PRACTICAL Coaching Course

If you coach graded players this is for you

- Coaching Tools
- Introduction to Constraints Led Approach
- Open v Closed Skill Learning
- Using Progressions
- Player Diagnostics

When: Sunday October 16th 10am-2pm

Where: Mana Squash Club

Register via email: admin@squashwellington.org.nz



G.J. Gardner.
HOMES

COMING UP

FINAL REMINDER: Squash Wellington Awards - Friday 14 October, Mana Squash Club

Nominations close **30 September**. To submit your nominations, go to squashwellington.org.nz/2022-awards/

R.S.V.P for Awards evening closes **3 October**.

Masterton Doubles	30 September
Red Star Doubles	7 October
NZ Junior Nationals - Individuals @ Hutt City	7 October
NZ Junior Nationals - Teams @ Hutt City	11 October
Squash Wellington Awards @ Mana	14 October
World Squash Day	15 October
Skill Learning Coaching Day @ Mana	16 October
Nga Hau e Wha Squash @ Taupo	21 October
Martinborough Doubles	28 October

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Contact
admin@squashwellington.org.nz for
 more details.





SQUASH WELLINGTON

2022 AWARDS

RSVP by 3 Oct

Friday Oct 14

Mana Squash Club

Ngati Toa Domain

Doors open: 5:30 PM

Dinner served: 6:30 PM

Awards commence: 7:00 PM

**JOIN US TO AWARD
VOLUNTEER, CLUB,
PLAYER OF THE YEAR
AND OTHERS**

Tickets are limited

\$30 per person

RSVP by 5pm Monday 3rd October

to Russell Henderson at

admin@squashwellington.org.nz