



**SQUASH**  
WELLINGTON

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2023**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Squash Wellington wish to express our gratitude for the support of the following funders, sponsors and supporters.



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# BOARD MEMBERS

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**Emma Sanchez-Brown (Chair)**

**Malcolm Thomas (Finance Officer)**

**Bryan Smith (Secretariat)**

**Samantha Reyes**

**Damien Lower**

Hutt City

Tawa

Hutt City

Thorndon

Wainuiomata

# CONVENORS

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**Nicola Ward-Thomas - Interclub Convenor**

**Bryan Smith - Masters Convenor**

**Gemma Gee - Junior Convenor**

Tawa

Hutt City

Hutt City

# CHAIR REPORT

On behalf of Squash Wellington Board, I present the Chair's report for the 2023/24 year.

I would like to firstly thank every volunteer, member and participant from all the clubs within our great district and family of squashies. I would secondly like to thank my fellow Board Members for their time and commitment throughout the year to the Board.

## **The Year That's Been**

I want to start by taking account of the year that is now completed. As a Board, we are guided by three principles:

**Participation & Promotion** – Growing awareness and participation in squash through a competitive and social lens.

**Capability Development** – Lifting coaching, player, and referring capability and capacity so that we can maintain a pipeline of talent and resources.

**Sustainability** – Future proofing squash through appropriate infrastructure and off court skill development.

We do not try to achieve these principles in a perfect environment. There have been challenges of high inflation, obtaining funding, ongoing influences of a worldwide pandemic, and the ever-challenging demand for volunteer participation. Added to these factors, there has been a massive change to the many ways we do squash at a national level.



Emma Brown  
**Squash Wellington  
Chair**

# CHAIR REPORT

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## **At A National Level**

This year has seen the introduction of a number of changes from Squash New Zealand, Poipātū Aotearoa. The introduction of the MySquash platform and the change from grading points to Squash Levels has not been easy. At times, it has felt that the goal posts were shifting weekly. There have been many meetings, including regular monthly meetings to the more personal “one on one” meetings to address matters that we as a Board may have spoken out about. The new platform is here now but not yet in its final form and will continue to take time and investment to see it reach its desired potential.

In conjunction with these changes, SNZ has introduced the new affiliation model. Again, much time has been spent to try and achieve the best outcome for our clubs and district. The current model will also evolve in the year(s) ahead and will be an ongoing focus for future Boards.

There has also been the recent introduction of the Club Uplift Challenge. I want to encourage as many clubs as possible to take advantage of this focus for the future success of our game.

## **At A District Level**

Turning our attention more specifically to a district level, I am filled with admiration at what we have achieved. I want to acknowledge the Boards that have gone before and the foundation that has been laid that we have continued to build upon throughout the year.

Our Squad Programme has seen continued success in both growth and achievement over last year and with record participation numbers this year, it is hopeful that we will continue to reap reward for our district.

I would like to highlight some of the success we have seen as a district, starting with the Masters. It was a pleasure to see the success the Masters division within the district and at a national level. It was also a pleasure to see the spirit and camaraderie within the team and the level of support shown to all players. This is one of the main goals that is sought through the squads.

I want to congratulate the following teams and individuals from our district:

# CHAIR REPORT

<b>New Zealand World Junior Championships Junior Team Representatives</b>	Maiden-Lee Coe – Mana Squash Club Oliver Dunbar – Tawa Squash Club
<b>New Zealand Secondary Schools Trans-Tasman Team</b>	Mackenzie Tait – Masterton Squash Club
<b>New Zealand Representatives Masters Trans-Tasman Team (Champions)</b>	Matt Green – Tawa Squash Club
<b>National Age Group Title U19 Boys Champion</b>	Oliver Dunbar – Tawa Squash Club
<b>North Island Junior Age Group U17 Boys Champion</b>	Oliver Dunbar – Tawa Squash Club
<b>North Island Junior Age Group Under 13 Girls Champion</b>	Liberty Jones – Red Star Squash Club
<b>Australian U17 Junior Open Champion</b>	Maiden-Lee Coe – Mana Squash Club
<b>New Zealand Masters Individuals Champion</b>	Sam Atkins – Tawa Squash Club

## At A Club Level

The challenges of running a volunteer organisation always feels harder than ever before. Our clubs are the pride of our district. You all work hard, not just for your own clubs but for the betterment of squash in our district and overall. We do what we do because somewhere, somehow and in some way, we love this game. To the members, from the causal to the committed, thank you. To the volunteers, you are the pride of your clubs and this game. So many unseen hands go into making our clubs and by extension, our district what it is. It is special to be able to acknowledge Ann Smith, SNZ National Volunteer of the Year. Whilst this is an outstanding achievement, I know that Ann would agree with the sentiment that every volunteer deserves acknowledgement and thanks.

# CHAIR REPORT

## **Looking Ahead**

It has been a year of challenges and successes. The year ahead will see some of those challenges continue and others arise. It also offers many opportunities for new successes.

It was recently noted that our district has 2 of the 8 high performance coaches within New Zealand. This is an amazing opportunity for our district. Not just for the players that are able to access that level of coaching, but it offers all tiers of coaches in our district access to a level of growth that many nationally are not afforded. We have only begun to scratch the surface of coach development in our district.

I want to recognise Gemma Gee who has settled into the role of Junior Convenor. There has always been a strong commitment by all our clubs to our juniors; to see those who are the future of the game develop and grow. Not just in their skills and abilities but as mature and amazing people. I want to ask the clubs and club Junior Convenors to continue to support Gemma and all the juniors of our district.

Finally, the New Zealand Masters will be hosted here in our district at the Tawa and Mana clubs. This is an opportunity for our district and our squad to shine. I know that the enthusiasm and commitment will lead to a very successful tournament and outcome for our Masters.

## **Closing Remarks**

I want to thank our General Manager Russell Henderson. I believe that the role of General Manager for Squash Wellington is more than just a job. Russell has demonstrated at times a spirit and tenacity in the role that is often displayed in a 5 setter that many of us have played. At times the role is frustrating and exhausting but always courageous and done with a never say die commitment.

I want to thank the board; Bryan Smith, Damien Lower, Sam Reyes and a special mention to Malcolm Thomas. All board members are volunteers and have personal lives and commitments they manage whilst giving their service to the board. I want wish Malcolm all the best for himself and his family as he steps down from the Board at this time.

I want to acknowledge the incoming board members, Ann Smith and Vance Kapene.

I took the role of chair with the intent of being available for 3 years for that role. However, life continues to happen, and I have taken the decision to step down as I believe that I will not be able to make the commitment the role requires in the year ahead. I want to wish everyone a great 2024.

*Emma Sanchez-Brown*

# GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Another year flown by in a flurry, and the first season in a number of years to run 'normally', or at least, the 'new normal'. With such a packed calendar in 2023, Wellington squashies were spoilt for choice when it came to tournaments in which to partake. One side-effect of this 'new normal', however, was that, by many accounts, entry numbers were down a little from the year before - perhaps players rediscovering their freedom meant that we had less of a captive audience than before.

The major changes led by Squash New Zealand Poipātū Aotearoa have dominated a lot of proceedings for us as a district, with the positive effect of bringing all districts together across the country and with it an increased sense of cohesion and sharing of ideas. Of course, with that, it has meant that some of our more district-focused projects have been afforded a little less attention than before. On the whole, MySquash, Squash Levels, the new Affiliation Model and the Club Uplift projects all seem set to have a very positive impact, and eventually we will find ourselves in a healthier position as a sport, better equipped for a changing world. But the hard work to get there has been significant, and continues to be so. Therefore, I'd like to acknowledge the Board Members, District Change Leaders and Club Change Leaders who have put in their time and energy in order to navigate these changes on behalf of our members, whilst ensuring that Wellington has an audible voice on a national level.



**Russell Henderson,  
General Manager**



# GM REPORT

The logo for HEAD, featuring the word "HEAD" in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a black background. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the letter "D".

## HEAD Series

Each of our HEAD series continued to be popular in 2023, providing accessible and supportive entry points into competitive squash for women and junior players. With the focus on participation, we kept entry fees to \$5, and prizes, kindly supplied by Sportco, were awarded according to overall series performance.

Due to popular demand, we extended the HEAD Junior 9Hundy series, adding an extra round to bring the total number of rounds to 7. We also saw a slight increase in numbers to 90 participants in total. In order to encourage numbers in some of the more geographically outlying areas, we created incentives in the form of double entry points for the rounds played at Wainuiomata and Martinborough. Congratulations to Lachlan Sayer, of Island Bay, 2023 series champion.

The series has grown once again in 2024, with 9 rounds planned, and a change of criteria to encompass the junior players whose levels have grown significantly with the introduction of Squash Levels in New Zealand. This means that boys up to the top of E grade, and girls up to the top of D grade can participate, as many of these players were J graders or E graders respectively in 2023.

The HEAD women's series had a slight change of criteria, changing from the previously titled 800 & Below, to E & Below. This catered for players who had risen to the top of E grade, and therefore had 'graded out' of the series but still benefitted from series participation in 2023. Numbers were down only slightly, from 50 in 2022 to 45 in 2023, but we still saw a dedicated core group of participants, and our series champion was Mamta Vanjani of Mana. Helpfully, this change of criteria also made for a smoother transition into the new grading system in 2024, not requiring any changes due to no longer referring to grading 'points'.

# GM REPORT



## Master of Masters

We had another year of the Master of Masters series, which thrived under the leadership of our Masters Convenor, Bryan Smith. 2023 was a big year for Masters tournaments in Wellington, with 7 in total spread across the year. A huge thank you goes out to our joint series sponsors in 2023, Skillsoft and Yellowhammer, whose support allowed us to reward our top 10 women and top 10 men with cash prizes. And a big congratulations to our series winners, Riana Rossouw (Mana Squash Club) and Vance Kapene (Wainuiomata Squash Club).

Masters is hugely popular in our district, which isn't surprising, given the number of players we have who are over 35! As our Masters coach Matt Green likes to point out, Masters is the age category where most of us spend the majority of our squash playing careers (I'm paraphrasing – sorry Matt). 2024 will be an exceptional year for Masters squash in Wellington, as we see the National Masters Championships being hosted by Tawa and Mana, after being postponed due to Covid in 2021.

However, we take the views of our entire community on board, and some younger Club Committee members have indicated that having too many Masters tournaments may take opportunities away from Senior players. So in 2024, we have brought the number of district Masters tournaments down to 6, with three of these now in the 'Juniors and Masters' format.

## District Tournaments

The Wellington Open returned to Hutt City in 2023, with excellent numbers again, if not quite at the heights of the 2022 entries. However, we were not overly concerned by this, as tournament entry numbers throughout the district had dropped a little. Most probably this was a result of the world opening up again post-Covid, with players more likely to be away and unable to participate than they were during the previous year. The Women's Final was a replica of the 2022 matchup, with Lana Harrison once again besting Charlotte Galloway. Evan Williams once again made an appearance in the Men's Final, however, he was beaten on this occasion in 4 by an in-form Anthony Lepper. We are excited to have the Wellington Open return to the Wairarapa in 2024 for the first time in many years, where it will be co-hosted by Masterton and Red Star.

# GM REPORT

Tawa Squash Club played host to the Wellington Junior Open, where the district's newest court saw the seemingly invincible duo of Oliver Dunbar (Tawa) and Maiden-Lee Coe (Mana) take out the boys' and girls' titles respectively. 2024 sees the Junior Open hosted by Squash@Upper Hutt, where it will form part of a long series of junior events in the Hutt Valley in 2024.

This includes the Wellington vs Central Junior Challenge (26 May) at Hutt City, College Sport Wellington Junior Event (26 June) at Hutt City, Hutt City Juniors and Masters (19-21 July), F&J Grade District SuperChamps (26-28 July) at Upper Hutt, New Zealand Secondary Schools Teams Event (2-4 August) at Hutt City, Upper Hutt and Wainuiomata, the Wellington Junior Open (16-17 August) at Upper Hutt, the New Zealand Secondary Schools Trans-Tasman Test (19-23 August) at Hutt City, plus rounds of the HEAD Junior Series at Wainuiomata, Upper Hutt, and the final (8 September) at Hutt City, courtesy of Series Convenor, Neil Haxton. With so many opportunities for juniors, we hope this will be a chance for the younger members of our squash community to grow and flourish.

The 2023 Wellington Masters returned to Mana Squash Club, who had done an excellent job of hosting the event in previous years, and last year was no exception. The Men's final saw a repeat of the previous year, with Matt Green once again taken out by reigning champ Sam Atkins. Nicki Gibbs was back on her right hand in 2023, after competing on her weaker hand in 2022, and she took the Women's title, beating Anna Marquis. This year sees the competition moving to Khandallah, who also kicked off the Masters season with their Juniors and Masters tournament in March.

## **SuperChamps**

We saw growth once again in SuperChamps entries in 2023, with numbers as illustrated below. A huge thank you to our host clubs for putting on some action-packed events with titles as closely fought as ever. B Grades were at Thorndon, C Grade joint-hosted by Red Star & Masterton, the huge D grade event took place at Tawa, and Island Bay took care of the E graders. This year we see B grades move to Kāpiti, C grade at Mana, D grade at Hutt City, E grade at Tawa, and F&J grade at Upper Hutt, which we hope will be a success due to the increased use of F grade in our district, bringing us into line with other districts around the country.

# GM REPORT

Grade	Women's Champs	Men's Champs	Hosts
B	Thorndon	Thorndon	Thorndon
C	Masterton	Mana	Red Star & Masterton
D	Thorndon	Club Kelburn	Tawa
E	Thorndon	Kāpiti	Island Bay

SuperChamps Teams Per Grade	2023	2022	2021
Women's B	2	3	3
Women's C	6	5	4
Women's D	7	8	8
Women's E	5	5	6
Men's B	4	5	5
Men's C	9	10	5
Men's D	10	6	7
Men's E	8	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>43</b>

## Development Squads

We saw more growth in our squad programme, with it entering its third year. Tying in to the Squash NZ-led End-to-End Pathway, this programme ensures that player capability is a focus for players of all ages and genders in our district. AZ Flooring returned as shirt sponsors, and their generous support made it possible for us to run our squads, and representative teams, in a year that was extremely challenging in terms of grant funding.

# GM REPORT

We were once again very fortunate to have the Junior and Senior squads led and coached by Evan Williams, and the Masters taken under the helm of Matt Green. Both Matt and Evan do a fantastic job of instilling the importance of teamwork and camaraderie in the squads, which elevates squash from what is often considered as an individuals' sport into a team sport.

We had 24 Junior players (up from 21 in 2022), 22 Seniors (up from 16), and a colossal 39 Masters (up from 26), making this by far the largest year for our squads to date.

Another exciting development came in the form of support from Wellington City Council and Nuku Ora, whose Development Programme provided us with the opportunity to bring in experts to work with our junior players, and to enlist a Developing Coach, Jack Shearer, to work alongside Evan and Matt, and in doing so invest in our coaching pipeline.

In 2024, we have seen numbers increase yet again, which has resulted in us splitting the Masters squad into two tiers; something we would like to do with the other squads in the future.

## **Representative Teams**

Squash Wellington were once again delighted to enter men's and women's (and junior men's and junior women's) teams for all three major national teams events in 2023, with some fantastic performances on all fronts.

The Seniors were our first travelling team, with the NZ Inter-District Teams Championship being held in Hamilton in 2023.

### **Senior Women's Representative Team:**

Maiden-Lee Coe - Mana

Abby Wotten - Tawa

Ellen Verry - Tawa

Hannah Grimmett - Ōtaki

Mackenzie Tait - Masterton

### **Senior Men's Representative Team:**

Evan Williams - Hutt City

Matt Green - Tawa

Oliver Dunbar - Tawa

Mike McCarroll - Thorndon

James Thompson - Khandallah

# GM REPORT

Juniors were up next, with the NZ Junior Championships being held at Hutt City for the second year running.

## **Girls' Representative Team:**

Maiden-Lee Coe – Mana  
Mackenzie Tait – Masterton  
Molly Hawkins – Hutt City  
Charlotte Haxton – Hutt City  
Sophie Sweeney – Red Star

## **Boys' Representative Team:**

Oli Dunbar – Tawa  
Shay Gannon – Mana  
Ben Jones – Red Star  
Liam Poskitt – Wainuiomata  
Riley Priest – Upper Hutt



And finally, the Masters made the trip all the way down to Invercargill.

## **Masters Women's Representative Team:**

Nicki Gibbs  
Emma Brown  
Riana Rossouw  
Margaret Harlen  
Emma Thorpe  
Jeanne Yells

## **Masters Men's Representative Team:**

Lee Chambers  
Shane Johnston  
Mark Millar  
Matt Green  
Richie Hoare  
Damon Winter



# ANNUAL AWARDS

Attendees once again filled Mana Squash Rackets Club as we celebrated the remarkable achievements of Wellington players, clubs, teams, and volunteers over the 2023 season. Huge thanks to Scott, Tanya, Nick, Paul, and the rest of the team at Mana, plus In House Catering for the amazing kai which helped to create a fantastic atmosphere in which to acknowledge our people.

It really was Hutt City's year, with them taking the coveted Club of the Year title, along with several other on and off-court awards. Huge congratulations to the team there for all the mahi! A special mention also goes to Ann Smith, an integral part of Hutt City, who went on to win the SNZ National Volunteer of the Year.

Award	Recipient	Award	Recipient
<i>Club of the Year</i>	Hutt City	<i>Player of the Year</i>	Maiden-Lee Coe
<i>Team of the Year</i>	Mana C Grade Men	<i>Player of the Year</i>	Matt Green
<i>Volunteer of the Year</i>	Ann Smith	<i>Junior Player of the Year</i>	Maiden-Lee Coe
<i>Referee of the Year</i>	Brett Simon	<i>Junior Player of the Year</i>	Oliver Dunbar
<i>Coach of the Year</i>	Evan Williams	<i>Masters Player of the Year</i>	Nicki Gibbs
<i>Jade Wilson Memorial</i>	Bryan Smith	<i>Masters Player of the Year</i>	Sam Atkins
<i>Initiative of the Year</i>	Hutt City Ladies Night	<i>Most Improved Juniors</i>	Liberty Jones & Lachlan Tong
<i>Best use of social media</i>	Hutt City Facebook & Instagram	<i>Most Improved Seniors</i>	Victoria Moyle & Richard Clarkson
<i>Slazenger Cup</i>	Hutt City	<i>Most Competitive Player</i>	Charlotte Haxton
		<i>Most Competitive Club</i>	Mana



# KEEP CALM AND PLAY SQUASH

**FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING**  
INTRODUCE THESE FIVE SIMPLE STRATEGIES INTO YOUR LIFE & YOU WILL FEEL THE BENEFITS

**CONNECT**  
TALK & LISTEN. BE THERE. FEEL CONNECTED



**BE ACTIVE**  
DO WHAT YOU CAN. EVERY DAY YOU CAN. WITH YOUR BODY.

**Give**  
YOUR TIME, YOUR WORDS, YOUR PRESENCE

**TAKE NOTICE**  
REMEMBER THE SIMPLE THINGS THAT GIVE YOU JOY

**KEEP LEARNING**  
EMBRACE NEW EXPERIENCES. SEE OPPORTUNITIES. SURPRISE YOURSELF

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