

Burnside Under 26 Singles “Summer of Bowls” 2021

On Friday 8 October, 32 lawn bowlers will step on to the Burnside Bowling Club’s greens to compete for the title of Burnside Under 26 Singles Champion. This event is an integral part of Bowls New Zealand’s 2021-2022 Summer of Bowls programme, and as the name suggests, is contested by both young women and young men aged under 26 years of age. Covid-19 has had an impact on the 2021 tournament in that players from Auckland and the Cook Islands have withdrawn because of the Alert Levels but, despite this, a high class field has been assembled by Tournament Convenor Kerrie Bruce.



Class of 2020

The silver fern has been worn by six of these players in age group and Development Squad test matches against Australia while Seamus Curtin (Stokes Valley) is already a capped Blackjack. This tournament has been one of the important stepping stones to the Blackjacks in recent years, with Selina Smith, Katelyn Inch, Tayla Bruce, Seamus Curtin and Sheldon Bagrie-Howley all including this event in their pathway to the National elite women’s and men’s teams.

The field will be drawn into four sections with each player having seven section games. The top two players in each section are then placed in Division 1, the next two in Division 2, and so on for Divisions 3 and 4. Four games of 21 shots up are played on both Friday and Saturday while the semi-finals and finals of each division will be decided on Sunday morning, 10 October starting at 9-00am.



Seamus Curtin



Taylor Horn

Two previous winners are back to attempt a second success. Seamus Curtin prevailed in 2018 when aged 18, while Taylor Horn (Cambridge Central), the National Men's Singles Champion in 2019, won this tournament in 2020 aged 23. Horn defeated Curtin last year in the quarter-finals and if these two meet again this year the match up will be one not to miss.

Other players who should challenge Curtin and Horn include impressive 2020 runner up Adam Baillie (Point Chevalier) who is hoping that Auckland moves to Level 2 before the event; Aidan Zittersteijn (Paritutu), bronze medallist in the Pairs while representing the Cook Islands at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, who always plays well on the Burnside greens; Keanu Darby (North East Valley) who is a perennial Division 1 player, will compete in his eleventh (and last) Under 26 Burnside tournament; Jesse Russell (Cambridge Central), who was runner-up in 2015 and a semi-finalist last year; 21 year old Anthony Ouellet (Bowls Tauranga South), who was also a Division 1 semi-finalist in 2020 where both he and Russell lost their semi-finals 20-21. Tom Taiaroa (West End, Timaru), Bradley Down (Plimmerton) and several others are also capable of upsetting any other player in this field.



Richard Hocking

Burnside's Richard Hocking is this year's standout local player. Runner up in 2016 is Richard's best result but he invariably wins his way into Division 1. The 2020-2021 season was a stellar one for him; winning two Canterbury Centre titles – Mixed Pairs with Tayla Bruce, and the Champion of Champions Men's Singles. He was awarded Bowls Canterbury's Young Player of the Year (Under 25) and the premier accolade – Bowls Canterbury Sportsman of the Year 2020-2021. In addition Richard was named Burnside's Player of the Year for the fourth time. He will be one to watch!

Other local players, Courtney Bodger (Woolston Park), Jack Bonner (Barrington United), Jack Brokenshire (Christchurch), Dylan Campbell (Woolston Park), Braeden Casware (Cashmere), Callum Cox (Burnside), Ellie Gordon (Parklands) and James Collier (Rangiora), will also be well supported by their club mates, family and friends.

This year 10 new players have been invited to play in this tournament, while 5 long-term loyal 25 year olds will play for the last time. While sad about this, Tournament Convenor Kerrie Bruce says that this is one of the strengths of the event as it means that the field refreshes itself each year with new players (this year three are aged 15) who will be assets to their clubs and centres in the future.

Bruce is excited about the quality of this group of young players. "There are always favourites but no one is guaranteed a place in the top eight. Any one of a large number of players can win the event. A feature of this tournament is the camaraderie shown by the players. Our Club volunteers involved with the tournament really appreciate the sportsmanship and attitude of these young people."

Spectators are welcome at Burnside Bowling Club; 330 Avonhead Road, Christchurch; entry is free. Please respect Covid-19 limitations if we are still at Alert Level 2. Full details including players' names, draws and results can be found at www.burnsidebowlingclub.com