

## 2023 Living House Burnside Under 26 Singles

This year will be the 20<sup>th</sup> playing of the prestigious Under 26 Singles event, with the 2023 Living House Burnside Under 26 Singles tournament taking place at the Burnside Bowling Club on Avonhead Road in Christchurch from Friday 6 October to Sunday 8 October.

Tournament Organiser Kerrie Bruce has assembled a top-class field of New Zealand's best young bowlers, as well as attracting entries from overseas. Of the 32 players, 15 are from the North Island, 12 from the South Island, three from Australia, and two from the Cook Islands. Eight young women and 24 young men, whose ages range from 14 to 25 years, will be competing. A feature of this event is that women and men play on equal terms, with no favours asked for or given. In 2011, Misty Arnold from Nelson was the first woman to win the coveted trophy, followed by Tayla Bruce (Burnside) in 2015. These two are the trail blazers for this year's female entrants. Tayla has gone on to win the 2022 NZ Women's Singles Championship, the 2022 World Bowls Women's Singles Champion of Champions title and crowned these achievements by winning the 2023 World Women's Singles Championship at the recent World Bowls Championships held on the Gold Coast. All players are sure to be inspired by Tayla's success, as she is this event's Tournament Director.



Field of 2022

Several players have international experience. Bowls Australia is sending two 21-year-olds, **Nick Cahill**, who plays for Broadbeach on the Gold Coast, and **Kira Bourke** from Tweed Heads Bowling Club. Nick was Bowls Australia's 2022 Male Bowler of the Year when he was runner-up in both the Men's Singles and Mixed Pairs at the 2022 World Junior Championships. He also won silver medals in the Men's Singles and Pairs at the 2023 Multi Nations tournament held in March. Kira won the bronze medal in the Women's Singles at the same Multi Nations event. These two players will be accompanied by Queensland Satellite Coach and 2008 World Bowls Women's Fours champion, former Jackaroo **Claire Turley** – an always welcome visitor to Burnside's greens. **Emily Jim** (23) and **Phillip Jim Jnr** (18) come from the Rakahanga Club in the Cook Islands. Emily represented the Cook Islands at the 2018 and 2022 Commonwealth Games, 2023 World Bowls Championships, and won a bronze medal in the Women's Fours at the 2023 Oceania Challenge event held in Auckland in April. Phillip is the holder of the Cook Islands 2022 Men's Pairs title. **Adoni Wichman-Rairoa** (22), who plays at Club Merrylands in Sydney, represented the Cook Islands at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the 2023 World Bowls Championships.

Many of the NZ players will also be ones to watch. **Anthony Ouellet** (22, Bowls Tauranga South) won this event in 2021. He has won numerous Bay of Plenty titles and will be a very strong contender again this year. **Adam Baillie** (21, Auckland) was runner up in this event in 2020 and won the Deaf World Championship Men's Singles gold medal at Edinburgh in September. **Briar Atkinson** (19, Paritutu, New Plymouth) won the 2023 Bowls NZ National Champion of Champions Women's Singles and was recently named the Bowls NZ 2023 Emerging Player of the Year. Together with

**Caitlin Thomson**, (23, Ōmokoroa, Bay of Plenty), Briar won the 2023 Oceania Challenge Women's Pairs while representing the NZ Under-26 team. **Nathan Goodin** (20, Rahotu, Taranaki) was a first division semi-finalist in this event in 2022 and the 2022 Taranaki Youth Bowler of the Year. In the 2023 Oceania Challenge, he represented the Aotearoa Māori team, winning a gold medal in the Men's Triples and a bronze medal in the Men's Fours. **Aiden Takarua** (24, Point Chevalier, Auckland) has represented NZ in Development teams. Aiden has featured in the Bowl3Five televised league, highlighting his attacking style of play. **Ashleigh Jeffcoat** (24, Carlton Cornwall, Auckland) is a current member of the wider Blackjack squad and was a member of the winning 2023 National Women's Fours team. Together with **Olivia Mancer** (Burnside), and **Henrietta Scott** (Kia Toa Hastings), Ashleigh was runner-up in the Women's Triples at the 2023 Oceania Challenge while representing the NZ Under-26 team. **Adam Blucher** (18, Te Atatu Peninsula, Auckland) is the 2023 Bowls Auckland Young Player of the Year and finished well up the table in his first attempt at Burnside last year. **Jonty Horwell** (24, Kaikorai, Dunedin) always performs well on the Burnside greens and was selected into the winning South team in Bowls NZ's 2022 North v South event in Dunedin. **Hamish Kelleher** (18, Cobden/Halswell) has been the West Coast Senior Player of the Year for the last two years. He recently moved to Christchurch for study.

The youngest players in the field are **Liam Hill** (14, Ellerslie) and **David Motu** (16, Mt Eden). These good mates were revelations in the 2022 event, when aged 13 and 15 respectively. Both qualified to play in Division One. They met in a quarter-final, with Liam the victor. Liam went on to the semi-final where he was defeated narrowly by the eventual winner, Taylor Horn. Both played in the 2023 Oceania Challenge; Liam for Tonga and David for the NZ Under-26 team. David won gold in the Men's Fours and silver in the Men's Triples. He played in both events with **Tom Taiaroa** (24, West End Timaru), who has also always played well in the Burnside Under 26 Singles.

Local interest will centre on nine players from the Canterbury region: Rebecca Jelfs (23, Belfast), the 2022 Canterbury Centre Women's Singles Champion; Jacob Inch (17, Oxford Club); Hamish Kelleher (18, Cobden/Halswell Clubs); Liam O'Connor (24, Allenton); Braeden Casware (20, Riccarton Racecourse); Dylan Campbell (20, Woolston Park); and three Burnside players, NZ Under-26 representative Olivia Mancer (19), Callum Cox (17), and Jayden Owens (17). The fortunes of these young players will be closely followed their club mates.

This tournament is always played in good spirit. There is prize money at stake, the NZ selectors are there to be impressed, and personal pride counts for a lot. But, most of all, is the chance to renew old friendships and make new ones, while enjoying playing at a consistently high level with your peers. The event has always produced upset results and successfully predicting a winner has always been difficult. The 2023 tournament will be equally interesting because of the quality of this field.



Left to right: **Anthony Ouellet, Nathan Goodin, Ashleigh Jeffcoat, Liam Hill**

In recent years, World Bowls Inc. has indicated its interest in applying to the International Olympic Committee for Lawn Bowls to become an Olympic Sport. The 2032 Olympics are to be held in Brisbane. Queensland has some of the best bowling facilities in the world and Australia (and NZ) some of the best bowlers. It could be that, if all the stars align, some of the young bowlers on show at Burnside in this event, could be among our first Bowls Olympians. Here's hoping!

Full details of the 2023 Living House Burnside Under 26 Singles including players, format and timetable can be found on the Burnside website [www.burnsidebowlingclub.com](http://www.burnsidebowlingclub.com) Spectators are welcome and there is no entry charge. You will not be disappointed. Bowls NZ will be live streaming a semi-final and the Division 1 final on Sunday 8 October (and likely an afternoon game on Saturday 7 October) through Bowls NZ YouTube.