**The 89th Annual North Island Championships**

These were held across three venues over the period 2-6 January 2013.

The Doubles event was held on 2/3 January at the Paraparaumu Croquet Club. With 13 teams entered it was decided to run it as a flexible swiss event,

The Open and the Plate, with a combined entry of 28 players, was held at Paraparaumu on 4/6 January, with 3 courts at Waikanae also used. The Open was a knockout with players exiting that event, up to and including the quarter-finals, being eligible to compete in the consolation flexible swiss Plate event. Game results from the Open counted for the Plate.

The 4+, with 14 players, was run at Plimmerton Croquet Club on 4/6 January. This event was also run as a flexible swiss.

With essentially fine weather on both days of the Doubles we were treated to some exceptional croquet. The courts at Paraparaumu were running in excess of 10 seconds and very true. Long distance roquets were exceedingly common. Play continued into the evening on both days. We had been forecast some drizzle towards the end of play on the first day but we got a little more than we bargained for. At 7.30pm and with 15 minutes left on the clock, the players suddenly found the sprinklers spraying up around them. Being hardy souls they soldiered on and completed the task. Kathie Grant shall in future be known as “The Maid of the Mist”.

The Doubles winners were Aiken Hakes and Nina Mayard-Husson who achieved the qualifying goal of five games with five wins against the best teams in the competition. The competition then heated up to locate the runners-up. Jenny Clarke and Greg Bryant won that race, with an 80% wins/games result, after playing 10 of the 12 teams and in a flurry of three 26TP-0 results at the death.

The Open event was almost a Manager’s dream come true with most BO3s being won 2-0. However, an early start was required on day two to complete two matches before their quarterfinals could get underway. We were treated to a number of sextuple peels, a quadruple and triples were a dime a dozen throughout the event. The second day saw both the quarters and the semis completed by 7.30pm and we departed looking forward to a BO5 contest between Greg Bryant and Michael Wright on the final day.

Meanwhile the Plate event saw lots of action with players needing to play 9 games to qualify. On day one, 11 Open players plus a sole Plate entry, commenced the tournament at Waikanae and continued play there throughout the day. On day two all Open quarter-finalists were based at Paraparaumu with Waikanae then hosting 12 players at the lower-end of the Plate results standings. At the start of day three, Aiken Hakes and Steve Jones jostling for top placing with 70% and 75% of wins respectively. Steve ultimately came through to claim top spot on the final day with 8/10 for an 80% result.

After four legs, the Open BO5 contest was won by Greg Bryant.

The 4+ event at Plimmerton highlighted some exciting new talent appearing on the national croquet scene. Wayne Gair (Plimmerton) and Doug van Belle (Wellington) were tied on 5/6 wins/games at the end of day two with Heather Nixon (Waimarie), Murray Goldfinch (Otago) and Graeme Fisher (Plimmerton) in hot pursuit on 4/6. Day three saw Wayne Gair come through as the winner with 7/8 wins (87%) and Graeme Fisher as runner-up with 6/8 wins (75%).

A thoroughly enjoyable tournament played in excellent weather and in excellent spirit. My thanks to the players, the host Clubs and to my management team Kelvin Watson (M), Brian Boutel (R) at Plimmerton, Dennis Kerr (M/R) at Waikanae and John Dawson (TR) at Paraparaumu.

Tom Berryman

Tournament Manager