



Back-to-back Birkenhead blockbusters

February proved to be a most tumultuous time for most parts of New Zealand's North Island, with widespread flooding and Cyclone Gabrielle hitting regions hard.

Of course, the well-known North Harbour Centre was no exception - though not even the brute force of mother nature could hold down the prestigious Birkenhead pairs events - with both the men's and women's flagship instalments going ahead as planned.

First up was the men's open pairs competition, with the annual classic proving a drawcard for high performers, littered with stars, including past, current and future internationals, as well as some of the best players on the local scene.

After four rounds of section play, the 32 combinations were whittled down to the top 16, with the remaining 16 teams dropping down to a Plate Section. Following three rounds of exciting knockout rounds, only two

teams remained in the Champions Cup draw - both pairings unbeaten to this point, snagging seven wins each and setting up a thrilling final on the Birkenhead green.

Getting out of the blocks early, Auckland composite Bart Robertson and Steve Hoeft took a 9-6 lead opposite New Zealand Blackjack representative Tony Grantham and Takapuna lead Jerry Belcher, though a quick turn of play saw Grantham secure seven unanswered shots over

the next two ends to lead, 13-9.

Despite a spirited attempt to get back in the final, Grantham and Belcher held on for the win, 14-13, giving Grantham his third win in this event and Belcher his first.

Both Grantham and Belcher were congratulated on their efforts and awarded a \$1500 winners' cheque.

In other results, former New Zealand international Jamie Hill and Mark Burgess took out the Champions

Cup A flight opposite Mike Bradshaw and Kevin Morris, while Sean Hird and Adam Wishnoski secured the Consolation spoils.

Meanwhile, one week later, the women's edition saw the Takapuna powerhouse of Lisa Dickson and Lauren Mills romp to the spoils, rewarded for their efforts in section play on day one following an early halt in play, due to incoming weather conditions.

With the weather forecast to take a turn for the worst, the decision was made to cut the tournament short by one day - enabling those travelling north and south to get away early and home safely - in hindsight, a genius move given the onslaught of horrific weather that followed.

Prizes were awarded on the results from Saturday's play. Mills and Dickson were declared the tournament winners, taking away the

• *Continued* ▶



• *The Class of 2023 for the prestigious Birkenhead Open Men's Pairs.*

2023 Birkenhead Pairs Classics

Men:

Champions Cup:

Winners: Jerry Belcher, Tony Grantham

Runners-up: Bart Robertson, Steve Hoeft

Third equal: Roger Andrew, David Clark

Third equal: Bill Fulton, Tony Garelja

Champions Cup A Flight:

Winner: Mark Burgess, Jamie Hill

Runners-up: Kevin Morris, Mike Bradshaw

Champions Cup B Flight:

Winners: Logan Clark, Shane Drabble

Runners-up: Kevin Dixon, Martin Dixon

Consolation:

Winners: Adam Wishnoski, Sean Hird

Runners-up: Daniel Hood, Bryce Mackie

Consolation Flight:

Winners: John Gray, Steve Beel

Runners-up: Brent Malcolm, Greg Taylor

Last Chance Challenge:

Winners: Mike Haggart, John Hindmarch

Runners-up: Liam Hill, Bendon Kelly

Women:

Cup Championship:

Winners: Lauren Mills, Lisa Dickson 4 wins + 66

Second: Ann Muir, Sue Wightman 4 wins + 38

Third: Trish Hardy, Debbie White 4 wins + 33

Fourth: Karen Vaissiere, Penny Wakelin 3 wins 1 draw +6

Fifth: Mary Campbell, Gayle Melrose 3 wins + 38

Sixth: Connie Mathieson, Milika Nathan 3 wins +33

Seventh: Mina Paul, Marilyn Constantine 3 wins +33

Eighth: Kelly Clark, Didge Cullen 3 wins +19

Consolation:

First: Lyn Calver, Keiko Kurohara 2 wins +2

Second: Judi Farkash, Claire Tawharu 2 wins -7

Third: L Croot, Jacqui Belcher 2 wins -13

Fourth: Theresa Rogers, Sheryl Wellington 1 win 1 draw +13



• A strong contingent emerged for the 2023 Birkenhead Open Women's Pairs.



• Takapuna's Jerry Belcher and New Zealand international Tony Grantham emerged as winners of the 2023 Birkenhead Open Men's Pairs, remaining unbeaten throughout.

\$1,500 winners' cheque and awarded the Chinery Swart Cup' for 2023.

The win gave Dickson her second title at this event, having taken it out previously with Anne Dorreen, in 2015.

Across rinks, results saw Northland duo Ann Muir and Sue Wightman claim second spot in the Cup Championship, while Takapuna's Lyn Calver and Keiko Kurohara came first in the Consolation tier.

Both events were endorsed as part of the Bowls New Zealand Summer of Bowls programme, wrapping up an action packed fortnight at the Birkenhead club.

- Sam Morton



• Star-studded Takapuna duo Lisa Dickson and Lauren Mills took out the 2023 Birkenhead Open Women's Pairs, awarded the overall winners despite the action being cut short one day early.