

REVIEW OF 2019 BIG4 WHITERS LAKES CLASSIC RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 27th Anniversary of the BIG4 WHITERS Lakes Classic, was played out at **FURRY'S** Lakes Squash & Movie Theatre and was highlighted by Steve Andrewartha taking out his seventh Lakes Classic Men's Open title, Judy Kool winning her fourth Women's Open crown for the year, the Haberecht families' pillaging of the singles events and escaping with three outright titles, plus the enthralling A Grade Singles final between Steve Theologou and Jordan Rounds to decide the Victorian A Grade GP Circuit Champion for 2019.



L-R: Judy Kool, Furry & Steve Andrewartha

The Rob McFadzean Memorial Award for the best performance by a junior was won by eleven-year-old George Ioakim who is a member of the Lakes Entrance Club, and who was playing in his first ever GP tournament, having recently started playing racquetball.



L-R: Michael Smits, George Ioakim & Furry

The tournament attracted a capacity field of 139 entries including seventeen Grand Prix Tournament Circuit debutants.

MEN'S OPEN

For the previous eighteen years this event has virtually been owned by Cam White with eight titles and Steve Andrewartha winning it on six occasions as well as being runner-up four times, but this year White was unavailable and Andrewartha was returning from injury, plus Geelong's Garry Pedersen the current leader on the Victorian Grand Prix Circuit's rankings table, was at the peak of his form.

The final stanza was played out by 2019 National GP Circuit Champion Peter French, who had come from a game down to overcome top seeded Pedersen in their semi-final, 16/21, 21/16, 21/15, and Andrewartha who had ousted Wagga's third seeded Craig Ambler, 21/15, 21/13, in his penultimate match.

The final commenced at a hectic pace with both players unrelenting in their pursuit of claiming every point available which went unabated for the entire contest of seventy four points, making it a most entertaining contest, with Andrewartha eventually claiming the title, 21/18, 21/18, and his seventh Lakes Classic crown.

There was some consolation for Pedersen as he won his second Victorian GP Circuit Champion title in a row.

WOMEN'S OPEN

This event boasted seven times Australian Open and seven times Victorian Open Champion Judy Kool, plus 2018/19 Australian GP Circuit Champion Sue Dunlop, and 2019 South Australian Open Champion Corinne Yallup-Cross, with Kool and Dunlop eventually meeting in the final chapter of this event, and Kool overcoming Dunlop, 21/4, 21/10, and claiming her third Lakes Classic Women's crown in a row, with Dunlop taking out the 2019 Victorian GP Circuit award.

In their respective semi-finals, Dunlop overcame Yallup-Cross, 16/21, 22/20, 21/15, and Kool accounted for Westerfolds Bayswater's Aeron Skidmore, 21/6, 21/2.

A GRADE

It was not just the Lakes A Grade title "up for grabs" for this event, but also the Victorian GP Circuit Champion's Award, as going into this tournament locals Steve Theologou and Jordan Rounds were tied in second place on 2,640 points on the ranking's table behind James Long, who was unavailable to play in this event.

The final stanza was played out between these two locals and it went right down to the wire, with Theologou coming back from a game down and claiming the 110th point and the match, 18/21, 21/7, 22/21.

At the semi-final stage of the event, Rounds ousted SS&A's Cory Sutcliffe, 21/8, 21/12, and Theologou overcame the indefatigable Brandon Smits, 22/20, 14/21, 21/12.

B GRADE

A three-man field lined up for the B Grade round robin, which was won by another local Dean Jacobi, winning both his matches in straight games over Bairnsdale's Anthony Baxter and Lakes Entrance's Daniel Stedman, with Baxter defeating Stedman to claim second position.

Ballarat's Blake Caspersz took the honours for the Victorian GP Circuit Champion's Award.

C GRADE

Lakes Entrance's Michael Smits has been on top of the Victorian rankings all year in C Grade events, plus he had already pocketed the 2019 National GP Circuit Awards for both singles and doubles, but this event also contained 2019 Wangaratta Open C Grade winner in Chris Rounds, the ultra-consistent Michael Brigden, and a few other locals who looked capable of advancing deep into the event.

The first major casualty came in the bottom half of the draw at the quarter final stage with the ousting of third seeded Brigden in straight games by local player Ryan Dobson, then he followed that up with a nail biting win over the second seeded Rounds, 22/21, 13/21, 21/17, and finally had the temerity to dispose of the tournament's naming right's sponsor Michael Smits of Big4 Whitters, in a very close encounter to capture his first GP Circuit title, 18/21, 21/17, 21/11. In his penultimate match, Smits overcame another local Tony Robinson, 21/12, 22/20.

With his performances at this event Smits capped off a unique year by winning both the National and Victorian GP Circuit awards for the C Grade Singles and Doubles events.

D GRADE

This event provided another large field with fourteen facing the starter including Scott Haberecht, who had won two of the three events he had played in this year, Commercial Club's thirteen year old Xavier Brigden, plus a relative newcomer to the sport Mt. District's sixth seeded Paul Johnson, playing in only his second event, after reaching the semi-finals of the ESRA C Grade event earlier this year.

The final stanza was played out by Haberecht and Johnson with Haberecht overcoming Johnson in a most entertaining encounter, 21/19, 21/15, and in the process claiming the Victorian GP Circuit crown.

In their respective semi-finals, Haberecht overcame Casino's much travelled warrior Ben Bell, 21/17, 13/21, 21/11, with Johnson ousting second seeded Brigden, 21/13, 21/15.

E GRADE

Although two youngsters, Corio's Jackson Lander-Mitchell, and SS&A's Harrison Haberecht were seeded to meet in the final stanza the field also included a host of Gippsland players capable of reaching the pointy end of the event.

Eventually it was the top two seeds who came together at the final stanza to fight it out with Haberecht taking the points, 21/12, 21/16, and recording a second singles win for his family.

In their penultimate matches, Lander-Mitchell overcame Bairnsdale's Robbie Coates, 21/10, 21/12, with Haberecht doing likewise against third seeded Bairnsdale youngster Sam O'Kelly, 21/13, 21/13.

The E Grade GP Circuit Award was won by Jacqueline Wilcock.

F Grade

Bairnsdale's GP debutant Belinda Bird had a great introduction to her first GP Circuit event when she defeated Lakes Entrance's Paige Robinson in the final of this event, 21/13, 21/19, with Bairnsdale's Harry Kool finishing in third place.

Jessica Wilcock made it a double for Team Wilco by taking out the F Grade GP Circuit Award.

Junior Boy's Under 13

Although SS&A's Connor Haberecht and Blake Sutcliffe have dominated the junior boys events this year, with both taking first and second positions respectively in the recent Australian Open title, there was a lot of interest centred on who would join them at the semi stage of this event from the very large Lakes Entrance and Bairnsdale contingents.

Eventually it was Bairnsdale's Tarkyn Scott that met Haberecht at that stage and although going down to him showed he had a lot of promise for the future in his 10/21, 6/21 loss, whilst Lakes Entrance's George Ioakim also displayed immense talent in his close loss to Sutcliffe, 12/21, 20/22.

The final was a closely fought encounter with Haberecht holding on to claim the title, 21/10, 17/21, 21/18, and along with it the Victorian GP Circuit crown for this event, plus making it a big day for his family with their third singles title.

Junior Girl's Under 13

Amelia Brigden has been dominating the junior girl's events for the past two years and was a clear cut favourite for this event, so there was heavy interest in seeing who she would be facing in the event's climax, which eventually turned out to be Bairnsdale's Emily Kool, a recent addition to the sport, who put up a brave fight before succumbing to Brigden, 21/9, 21/9, who also took out the GP Circuit Award for this event.

RESULTS

SINGLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Men's Open	Steve Andrewartha	Peter French
Women's Open	Judy Kool	Sue Dunlop
A	Steve Theologou	Jordan Rounds
B	Dean Jacobi	Anthony Baxter
C	Ryan Dobson	Michael Smits
D	Scott Haberecht	Paul Johnson
E	Harrison Haberecht	Jackson Lander-Mitchell
F	Belinda Bird	Paige Robinson
Junior Boy's U/13	Connor Haberecht	Blake Sutcliffe
Junior Girl's U/13	Amelia Brigden	Emily Kool

DOUBLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Open	Edgley/Freshwater	N/A
A	Smits/Theologou	Tiet/Horvat
C	Parkinson/Westman	Dobson/Sentry
D	Marturano/Lander-Mitchell	Bell/Peterson
E	Carle/Dunk	A. Brigden/C. Brigden

SINGLES EVENTS



Men's Open - Peter French & Michael Smits



Women's Open - Furry, Sue Dunlop & Michael Smits



Michael Smits & Corinne Yallup-Cross



A Grade - Adam Lander, Michael Smits, Steve Theologou, Jordan Rounds



C GRADE - Michael Smits, Furry & Ryan Dobson



D Grade - Scott Haberecht & Michael Smits



E Grade - Harrison Haberecht & Michael Smits



Jackson Lander-Mitchell, Michel Smits & Talia Tatham



F Grade – Michael Smits & Paige Robinson



Junior Boys – Connor Haberecht & Michael Smits



Junior Boys – Blake Sutcliffe & Michael Smits



Junior Boys – Michael Smits & Hunter Douglas



Junior Girls - Michael Smits, Claire Lander- Mitchell, Amelia Brigden, Emily Kool & Furry

DOUBLES EVENTS



Open/A Grade- Back Row – Marcus Horvat, Carl Freshwater, Mark Edgley, Michael Smits, Middle Row – Sylvia Tiet, Adam Lander, Corinne Yallup-Cross, Front Row – Steve Theologou & Brandon Smits



C Grade - Back Row – Matt Westman, John Sentry, Michael Smits, Ryan Dobson, David Parkinson, Front Row – Furry & daughter Hannah Leonti in their double's costumes. Yes, that is what they played their doubles matches in!!!!



D Grade – Back Row – Ben Bell, Jeff Peterson, Michael Smits, Jackson Lander-Mitchell & Jarrod Marturano

Front Row – Sam & Brendan O'Kelly



E Grade – Back Row – John Carle, Robert Coates, Michael Smits,

Front Row – Amelia & Cheryl Brigden, Talia Tatham, Frank Dunk.

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Photos: Courtesy of Samantha Walker

Special Presenters: Chris Fuhrmeister(Furry) & Michael Smits