

REVIEW OF 2022 ESRA OPEN RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Following the closure of the Westerfolds Bayswater courts the 2022 ESRA Open Racquetball Championships were played for the first time, at the state of the art Tonic Squash and Gym located in Dromana on the Mornington Peninsula. This was the first racquetball tournament held since our lives and sport have been ravaged by COVID-19 - only one tournament has been run nationally since the SA Open in March 2020. Considering all this, we were delighted by number of players who were keen to get back on the court in both singles and doubles; with very strong fields in both the Men's and Women's Open. Not surprisingly the King of Racquetball Cam White claimed the Men's title, extending his unbeaten record into its twenty second year. First time player, Tonic owner and ex squash champ, Amelia Martin, took out the Women's Open crown in a powerful, convincing display. Tonic's Chris England teaming with Mulgrave's Nelson Turner won the Open Doubles title.

TRIBUTE TO PAUL VEAR

The whole racquetball community mourns the loss of our grand master, Paul Vear, and this tournament was dedicated to his memory. Clearly the most influential and significant contributor to the sport's development and growth since 1977, Paul had more recently driven resurgent growth of racquetball in Regional Victoria and into other States with the establishment of the National Tournament Circuit. The ESRA tournament committee will attest to the amount of work they had to cover that normally would have been done by Paul. The man was a giant and his passion for racquetball unequalled. It is going to be difficult for us to cover the amount of volunteer work Paul put into our sport.

SINGLES EVENTS – ESRA PRESIDENT – IAN CHALMERS; SPECIAL PRESENTER – ROSS FALCONER

SINGLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Men's Open	Cam White	Garry Pedersen
Women's Open	Amelia Martin	Sue Dunlop
A	Josh McMillan	Matthew Tench
B	Will O'Connell	Michael Fatouros
C	Daniel Rolls	Vic Di Luzio
D	Leanne Haley	Elsabe Du Plooy
E	Stewart Harvey	Michael Westman
F	George Calombaris	Melanie Sinclair
Junior Girls	Jackson Martin	Elijah Rolls
Junior Boys	Maddy Rolls	Aimee Westman

MEN'S OPEN



L-R: Garry Pederson, Ryan McCarter, Cam White

The nine player field played out a Swiss Draw, with the top 4 seeds progressing to the semi-finals.

In the first semi, top seed White ran Wagga's Craig Ambler all around the court to a 21-9, 21-6 victory. The second semi saw second seed Garry Pedersen continuing his more recent dominance over Ryan McCarter edging him out 21-17, 21-17.

The playoff for 3rd and 4th was a grueling affair with Ambler first dominating, McCarter grinding his way back; coming from behind in the second game, to eventually win 13-21, 21-19, 21-19.

In the final, Pedersen tried to take it up to White and played out many long, entertaining rallies; with both players moving each other all over the court. Ultimately, White's class and vast array of shots prevailed, winning 21-12, 21-12.

WOMEN'S OPEN



L-R: Sue Dunlop(2nd), Amelia Martin(1st), Sally White(4th), Sarah Quinlivan(3rd).

Whilst there were only 5 players, the field was the strongest Women's Open for some time with three of the top five ranked players and the inclusion of former world ranked squash players Amelia Martin and Karen Kronemeyer. This being a 5 player round robin, each player had to play 2 games against the four others. It is a difficult task to play 4 matches in a single day of competition. Martin showed her absolute class, quickly adapting to the bouncy blue ball. She dominated each match winning 21-10, 21-6 (Sally White), 21-7, 21-6 (Sue Dunlop), 21-3, 21-6 (Sarah Quinlivan) and 21-5, 21-6 (Kronemeyer) for a maximum 168 points.

Dunlop showed her experience in her other three matches to take out second place accumulating 143 points. Special tribute to Kronemeyer, who due to squash coaching commitments, could not play until 2pm; on the understanding she would have to play all 8 games without a break. After 6 games with very long rallies, she was unable to continue and had to forfeit. We think sometimes squashies underestimate how tough racquetball can be. 😊

A GRADE

Played as a six player round robin, Josh McMillan won his pool beating Rob Hay 21-19, 21-11 and Nelson Howard 21-18, 21-12. In the other pool Matt Tench beat Carlos da Silva 21-19, 21-14 and Adrian Sommerfeld 21-17, 21-19.

The final was a tough affair early, with McMillan running over the top of Tench winning 18-21, 21-6, 21-6.

L-R: Matt Tench, Josh McMillan



B GRADE



Nine players fought out a Swiss Draw. The semis and finals all went to 3 games with very long, entertaining matches. The first semi saw Will O'Connell outlast Matt Westman 17-21, 21-6, 21-19. In the other semi, Tonic's Michael Fatouros playing in his first tournament fought off Lance Cowan to win 21-13, 19-21, 21-15.

In the final, O'Connell came from behind against Fatouros to prevail 17-21, 21-13, 21-16.

L-R: Michael Fatouros, Will O'Connell

C GRADE

This nine player Swiss Draw was a battle between the young and the old. Daniel Rolls played 19yo Nicola Baines in the first semi final, edging her out 21-14, 13-21, 21-13. The other semi featured 80yo Vic Di Luzio (looking 60!) making a comeback after a 10 year absence. Pitted against local Geoff Egan, no spring chicken himself, Di Luzio showed he had lost none of his flair winning 21-5, 21-16.

In the final, Rolls had too many shots for Di Luzio taking a 21-11, 21-12 win.



L-R: Daniel Rolls



D GRADE

Another nine player field, featured seven women, who dominated the play. The first semi was won by a very fit looking Leanne Haley who crunched Floyd Cowan 21-13, 21-11. In the other semi, Elsabe Du Plooy needed all her cunning to beat up-and-coming Amelia Brigden 21-9, 10-21, 21-14.

Haley went on her merry way to win 21-8, 21-12 over Du Plooy. Looks like C Grade for Leanne next tournament!

L-R: Leanne Haley, Elsabe Du Plooy

E GRADE



Four players competed in a round robin, with each player playing against the other three. Lilydale's Stewart Harvey, playing in his first tournament, won all his matches to take out the winner's title. Young Michael Westman from Wodonga was runner-up, losing only to Harvey 9-21, 18-21.

L-R: Stewart Harvey, Michael Westman

F GRADE

Four players, including three Tonic Gym members competed in a round robin; none having played racquetball before. Local celebrity, former Master Chef host, George Calombaris was the star attraction. What Calombaris lacked in skill was made up for in eagerness and determination and he won all of his matches to take out the title. Melanie Sinclair won two of her matches to take out second spot.

L-R: I think we know who's who!!



JUNIOR BOYS & JUNIOR GIRLS

Four boys and two girls competed in two pools each of two boys and one girl. The top boy in each pool played off to decide the winner, with the two girls playing against each other in their final.

Sara Alger who refereed the Junior matches commented after the finals that "all six children had been an absolute delight to referee". Congratulations are due to all families involved.



L-R: Maddy Rolls, Aimee Westman

JUNIOR GIRLS

Maddy Rolls proved to be too strong and experienced for younger first timer Aimee Westman beating her 21-1, 21-5. We are sure Aimee is only going to get better with experience!

JUNIOR BOYS

In pool 1, Jackson Martin won in a close contest with Elijah Sommerfeld, 22-21, 21-16. In Pool 2, Elijah Rolls defeated Hamish Sommerfeld, 21-3, 21-2.

In the final, Martin showed his squash 'Royalty' blood line by beating Rolls 21-16, 21-19 in another close contest.

L-R: Jackson Martin, Elijah Rolls



DOUBLES EVENTS – SPECIAL PRESENTER – LEON FAUSTINI

DOUBLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Open	Chris England Nelson Turner	Charlie Stevenson Darren O’Donnell
A	Silvia Tiet Marcus Horvat	Mark Purton Carlos da Silva
B	Will O’Connell Matt Westman	Lance Cowan Jacob Van Der Vegt
C	Paul Swan Wilson Swan	Steve Fry Michael Smits
D	Tim Hill Don House	Leanne Haley Jacqui Wilcock
E	Ian Chalmers David Nemes	Tony Gerard Jack Oster

OPEN

England / Turner d Stevenson / O’Donnell
21-13, 21-14



L-R: Darren O’Donnell, Nelson Turner, Chris England

A Grade

Tiet / Horvat d Purton / da Silva
21-11 21-19



L-R: Mark Purton, Marcus Horvat, Sylvia Tiet

B Grade

O'Connell / Westman d Cowan / Van Der Vegt
10-21, 22-21, 21-11



L-R: Lance Cowan, Jacob Van Der Vegt, Matt Westman, Will O'Connell

C Grade

Swan / Swan d Fry / Smits
15-21, 22-21, 21-12



L-R: Steve Fry, Paul Swan, Wilson Swan, Michael Smits

D Grade

Hill / House d Haley / Wilcock
21-12, 19-21, 21-13



L-R: Jacqui Wilcock, Don House, Leanne Haley, Tim Hill

E Grade

Chalmers / Nemes d Gerard / Oster
21-12, 21-5



L-R: David Nemes, Leon Faustini, Ian Chalmers

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Photo s: Courtesy of Shane Skidmore