

# **REVIEW OF 2019 BALLARAT OPEN RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The third longest running racquetball tournament in Australia, the Ballarat Open which commenced in 1985, recently held its 35th edition at the Ballarat Squash and Racquetball Centre in Wendouree, where it received 115 entries from across Australia vying for the booty on offer, plus it was the final hit out prior to racquetball's pinnacle event of the year, the 2019 Commercial Club Albury Australian Open Championships to be held in Albury/Wodonga on 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> October.

The highlights from the weekend included, Ryan McCarter capturing his second Men's Open title for the year which catapulted him into third placing on the 2019 Victorian Rankings table, just behind Garry Pedersen and Cam White, Bairnsdale's seven times Australian Open Champion Judy Wright, claiming her fourth Women's Open Crown for 2019, and remaining undefeated for the year, the Brigden (Amelia & Alex), and the Haberecht (Connor & Harrison) youngsters, winning their respective events, plus local Seth Adams claiming back to back Ballarat Open A Grade titles.

## **SINGLES RESULTS**

### **MEN'S OPEN**

Since 2011 this event has been owned by Cam White (2011/14/15/17/18), and Garry Pedersen (2012/13), with the only exception being in 2016 when Dromana's Steve Andrewartha prevailed, but in White's absence it created the opportunity for another name to be etched onto the event's Honour Roll, which is what eventually occurred.

Recent Tasmanian Open winner Garry Pedersen and 2019 Wangaratta Open winner Ryan McCarter were seeded to meet in the final stanza which after many great and entertaining matches was the eventual outcome.

In their respective semi-finals, Pedersen overcame Wagga's fourth seeded Craig Ambler, 21/17, 21/17, with McCarter overcoming Dromana's third seeded Steve Andrewartha, 21/18, 21/10.

The final commenced at a hectic pace with both players unrelenting in their pursuit of claiming every point available, until McCarter surged clear at the latter part of the first game.

The second game also opened at a frenetic pace, but this time Pedersen held on force the match into a third game decider, which again became a most enthralling game until McCarter lifted a gear towards the end which led to him seizing control and claiming his fourth Victorian GP title over a gallant Pedersen, 21/17, 17/21, 21/13.

### **Women's Open**

Unfortunately due to some late withdrawals, this event was reduced in number to two, but there was still plenty of quality left, as proven by their performances in other grades, Judy Kool in the A Grade event, stitching up the number one seed, and Sue Dunlop in the B Grade title.

Kool has only been beaten twice in tournament play over the past eighteen months, by Sarah Fitz-Gerald in the 2018 Victorian and Australian Open Championships, and in that time claimed seven Women's Open titles, whilst Dunlop has captured seven Women's Open titles as well, plus being runner up on six occasions.

The final was a titanic struggle with Kool eventually surviving a high-class encounter over the "never say die" Dunlop, 21/19, 21/13, but Dunlop still retains top position on both the Victorian and National Grand Prix Circuit rankings.

### **A GRADE:**

Eight quality A Grade players faced the starter for this event, including the 2019 ESRA and Geelong Open winner, James Long, 2018 National GP Circuit Champion Tim Paramore, plus last year's winner Ballarat's Seth Adams, who was seeded to meet Long in the final stanza, which is how the event panned out.

In their respective semi-finals, Long came back from a game down to defeat Lakes Entrance's seventh seeded Brandon Smits who had earlier accounted for fourth seeded local Mark Squire in their marathon quarter final encounter, 14/21, 21/11, 21/8, whilst Adams also came from a game down to overrun his Ballarat stable mate Anthony Bosner, 19/21, 21/18, 21/10.

The first game of the final went point for point until Long survived a nail biter 21/19; then in the second game Adams established an early lead and was never headed, sending the match into a decider which Adams took control of again at the start and cruised home to secure the match, 19/21, 21/10, 21/15, and make it two Ballarat A Grade titles in a row.

### **B GRADE:**

Ballarat's Blake Caspersz, was out to make it four consecutive titles at his home event, having won the 2016 and 2017 Ballarat C Grade events, and the 2018 B Grade title, plus enhancing his lead at the top of the GP Rankings table.

When the judge called a halt to proceedings for this event, it was Squash & Racquetball Victoria's General Manager Russell McLean who stole the limelight overcoming 2019 Victorian Open B Grade Champion Carlos Da Silva, in the finale, 21/15, 21/11.

In their respective semi-finals, McLean came from a game down to oust the top seeded Caspersz, 14/21, 21/11, 21/11, whilst Da Silva overcame Bendigo's David Malone, 21/14, 21/11.

### **C GRADE:**

The C Grade event provided the biggest field of the tournament with fifteen starters, which meant the winner had to survive at least four competitive matches over the course of the day.

In the end it was the top and third seeds, Lakes Entrance's Michael Smits and Commercial Club's Alex Brigden, who confronted each other in the final stanza, and it was literally a "last man standing affair".

After sixty-five minutes of unbelievable rallies, comebacks and counter punching, Brigden was able to claim the one hundred and sixteenth point and the title, 19/21, 21/17, 21/17, and keep this title in the Brigden family's hands as his father Michael won this event last year.

In their penultimate match to reach the final, Smits outlasted Geelong's Drew Crittenden, 21/14, 21/18, with Brigden falling over the line against Bendigo's Gary Clancy, 22/21, 22/20, atoning for his father's loss to Clancy in their stirring quarter final encounter which Clancy won, 11/21, 21/8, 21/16.

### **D GRADE:**

The hot favourite for this event was SS&A's Scott Haberecht who was playing in only his third GP Circuit event, his first being in the 2018 Australian Open where he was ousted at the quarter stage, but in 2019 he had claimed the Wangaratta and Victorian Open D Grade titles, although the dark horse looked to be Commercial Club's thirteen year old Xavier Brigden, who was competing in his first open graded event following him taking out five Junior under 13 events in 2018.

But in the end, it was one of the locals Ilija Pantelich, who put his three opponents to the sword, including Haberecht in the semi-finals, 21/18, 21/12, and Brigden in the final, 21/15, 21/12, and registering Ballarat's second singles title for the Championships.

To reach the event's finale, Brigden had overcome sixth seeded Anthony Morgan in the quarters, and second seeded Leanne Hayley, 21/11, 21/15, at the semi-final stage.

## E GRADE

After annexing the Victorian GP Circuit F Grade title in 2018, Amanda Pavia moved into E Grade where she was defeated in the Victorian Open E Grade final by the current leader on the National and Victorian Rankings tables Jacqueline Wilcock, who was unavailable for this event.

Two members of the Haberecht family, Tracy (the mother) and Harrison (the son), stood between her and Pavia's first E Grade title, and it was Harrison who stole the limelight in his first graded event following his participation in the junior events, defeating Pavia in the final, 21/11, 21/11.

## F GRADE

This event was a war of attrition with each player having to survive three matches, with eventually two Bendigo players sharing the major booty, GP debutant Sean Kelleher and Sue Moses playing in only her second GP event, following her second placing at the Geelong Classic, with Moses claiming the title, winning 21/12, 21/9.

In their respective semi-finals, Moses overcame another GP debutant Bendigo's Faolan Kelleher, 21/6, 21/4, with Sean Kelleher overcoming Corio's Danica Morgan, 21/13, 21/11.

## Junior Girls/Boys Under 13's

Amelia "Boss" Brigden once again took out the Junior Girl's event, defeating Ballarat's Isabelle Tobin in the final, 21/9, 21/7, and equalling her brother Alex's win in the C Grade event, with SS&A's Connor Haberecht taking out the Boy's event over Ballarat's Lachlan Tobin, 21/1, 21/0, making it a family double as well, following his elder brother's victory in the E Grade event.

SINGLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Men's Open	Ryan McCarter	Garry Pedersen
Women's Open	Judy Kool	Sue Dunlop
A	Seth Adams	James Long
B	Russell McLean	Carlos Da Silva
C	Alex Brigden	Michael Smits
D	Ilija Pantelich	Xavier Brigden
E	Harrison Haberecht	Amanda Pavia
F	Sue Moses	Sean Kelleher
Junior Girl's	Amelia Brigden	Isabelle Tobin
Junior Boy's	Connor Haberecht	Lachlan Tobin

*Men's Open - Garry Pedersen, Ryan McCarter, David Rowe, Darren O'Donnell, Steve Andrewartha*



**Women's Open – Judy Kool, David Rowe, Sue Dunlop**



**A Grade- Seth Adams, David Rowe**

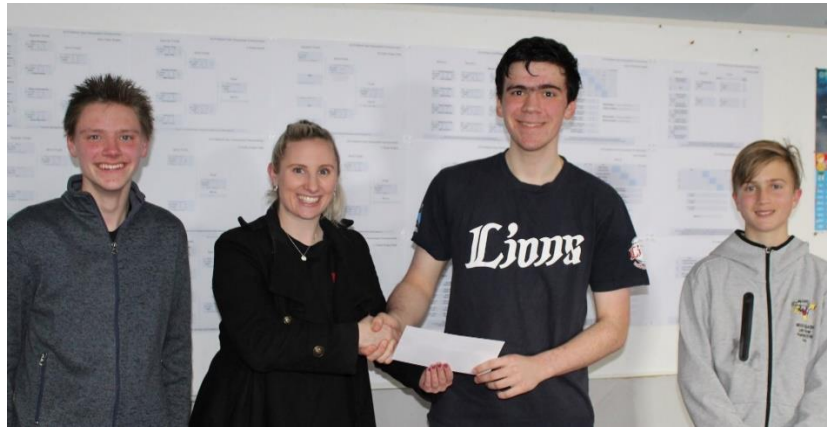
**B Grade – Carlos Da Silva, Russell McLean, David Rowe, Sue Dunlop**



**C Grade – Neil Dodgshun, David Rowe, Alex Brigden, Michael Smits, David Rowe**



**D Grade – Tyler Adams, Tara Pilvern, Ilija Pantelich, Xavier Brigden**



**E Grade – Tracy Haberecht, Harrison Haberecht, David Rowe**

**Amanda Pavia, David Rowe**



**F Grade – Sue Moses, David Rowe**

**Junior Girl's – Amelia Brigden, Isabelle Tobin, David Rowe**



**Junior Boy's – Lachlan Tobin, David Rowe, Connor Haberecht, David Rowe**



DOUBLES		
Grade	Winner s	Runners-Up
Open	Hain/Bayley	Stevenson/O'Donnell
A	Tiet/Horvat	Seth & Tyler Adams
B	Dawson/Da Silva	N/A
C	Smits/Clancy	Hall/Dodgshun
D	Crawford/Toogood	Pavia/Haley
E	Morgan/Goulding	N/A

**Open Doubles – Charlie Stevenson, David Rowe, Darren O'Donnell, Matt Bayley, David Rowe, Anthony Hain**



**A Grade Doubles – Seth Adams, David Rowe, Tyler Adams, Sylvia Tiet, David Rowe, Marcus Horvat**



**B Grade Doubles – Tanya Dawson, Carlos Da Silva**



**C Grade Doubles - Neil Dodgshun, David Rowe, Michael Smits, David Rowe, Gary Clancy**



***D Grade Doubles – Amanda Pavia, David Rowe, Rob Toogood, David Rowe, Sharyn Crawford***



***E Grade Doubles – Danica Morgan, David Rowe, Tegan Goulding***



Words: Paul Vear

Special Presenters: David Rowe & Tara Pilvern

Photos Courtesy of: Mark Squire & Leon Faustini