

## REVIEW OF 2018 BIG4 WHITERS LAKES CLASSIC OPEN RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 26<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the BIG4 WHITERS Lakes Classic, was played out at the Lakes Squash & Movie Theatre and was highlighted by the magnificent Men's Open Final between Garry Pedersen and Ryan McCarter, Judy Wright winning her fourth Women's Open crown for the year, plus the Brigden families' pillaging of the trophy presentations escaping with eight awards.

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

The tournament attracted a capacity field of 130 entries including eighteen Grand Prix Tournament Circuit debutants.



*Chris Fuhrmeister & Jed Key*

### MEN'S OPEN



*Chris Fuhrmeister & Ryan McCarter*



*Garry Pedersen & Michael Smits*

For the previous seventeen 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 neither player was able to attend, but still the event attracted a high quality field, boasting four of the top five players on the Victorian Grand Prix Circuit's rankings table, including the current leader Geelong's Garry Pedersen.

The final stanza was played out by top seeded Pedersen, who had been runner-up in all five previous Victorian Grand Prix events held this year, and 2018 Wangaratta Open champion Ryan McCarter, who had reached at least the semi stage of every event in 2018.

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 fifty-nine points, making it a most enthralling

contest, with McCarter eventually taking out the first game 15/13, but with both players nearly out on their feet.

The second game also opened at a frenetic pace, but the remarkable parts of McCarter's game is his great recovery, lack of errors, plus his tightness down the wall and cross court, but Pedersen was not to be denied, once again matching his opponent in all facets of the game, until the thirty first point which was one of the best and longest for the entire match, before McCarter claimed it and the title, 15/13, 16/15.

In his penultimate match, McCarter overcame third seeded Peter French, 16/15, 12/15, 15/7, whilst Pedersen ousted fifth seeded Mark Edgley, 15/7, 15/8.

### WOMEN'S OPEN

This event boasted seven times Australian Open and seven times Victorian Open Champion Judy Wright, who is also the current Lakes titleholder and leading the pack to become the 2018 Victorian Women's Open GP Champion, plus 2018 Australian GP Champion Sue Dunlop, and as expected they fought out the final chapter of this event, with eventually Wright overcoming the indefatigable Dunlop, 21/5, 16/21, 21/8.

In their respective semi-finals, Wright accounted for Mulgrave's Sylvia Tiet, 21/4, 21/4, and Dunlop overcame Westerfolds Bayswater's Aeron Skidmore, 21/8, 21/11.



***Chris Fuhrmeister & Judy Wright***

### A GRADE



***Chris Fuhrmeister & Clint Emery***

A three-man field lined up for the A Grade round robin which was won by 2018 Victorian Open A Grade runner-up Clint Emery, winning both his matches in straight games over Corio's Adam Lander and Mountain Districts Rob Hay, with Lander defeating Hay, 21/9, 21/17, to claim second position.

## B GRADE



***Michael Smits, Jordan Rounds & Chris Fuhrmeister***

down over Bairnsdale's James Ingram, 15/21, 22/20, 21/10, at the quarter final stage, plus survive a tough encounter with another local Jacob Van Ver Vegt, 21/19, 22/20 in their semi final.

The final lasted nearly eighty-five minutes and contained unbelievable rallies, comebacks and counter punching, before Rounds captured the one hundred and sixteenth point to take the title, 21/18, 20/22, 21/14.

In his semi-final, Rounds overcame second seeded Peter Walters, 22/20, 21/13, and put paid to a fairy tale ending for Walters, who has subsequently announced he is hanging up his squash and racquetball racquets after a long and distinguished career, particularly in squash where he won every Australian Deaf Games Men's Championship held from 1976 through to 2012, incredibly never being defeated in that 36 year period.

## C GRADE



***Matt Westman, Michael Smits & Alex Brigden***

Lakes Entrance's Jordan Rounds returned to the Grand Prix circuit in October following a twelve month break and captured the National B Grade title over a very strong field, but there was one player missing, another Lakes player top seeded Steve Theologou, who had won three out of the four B grade titles he had contested this year and was runner up in the other, so a Lakes quinella in this event looked a likely scenario.

Both players eventually reached the final stanza, Rounds won both his matches in straight games, but Theologou had to come back from a game

Bendigo's Anthony Dzioba has been on top of the rankings all year in C Grade, having won two titles, including the Victorian Open title, plus being runner up in two others, but this event contained the ultra-consistent Michael Brigden, who defeated Dzioba in the final of the Ballarat event, his rapidly improving fourteen year old son Michael, and a few local GP debutants who looked capable of advancing deep into the event.

The first major casualty came in the top half of the draw with the ousting of top seeded Dzioba in straight games in the second round by

Bairnsdale's GP debutant Craig Terrill, who then outpointed Lakes debutant Ryan Dobson in the quarters, 21/17, 22/21, but then lost a close semi-final encounter with Alex Brigden, 20/22, 18/21, who had survived a nail biter against Chris Rounds, 21/18, 12/21, 21/19.

In the bottom half of the draw Lakes Entrance's seventh seed Daniel Stedman was putting the sword to all and sundry including the Commercial Club's second seeded Michael Brigden at the quarter final stage, 21/19, 21/10, and Mulgrave stalwart Rayleen Cooper, in their semi final, 18/21, 21/11, 21/12, after Cooper had the temerity to dispose of the Manager of the tournament's naming right's sponsor and third seeded Michael Smits, 21/19, 21/11 in their quarter final encounter.

Although Brigden fought valiantly to the end and belied his years with his stroke making and courtcraft, it was Stedman who held sway throughout a most entertaining final, eventually winning, 21/16, 21/17.

The Plate event was won by Commercial Club's Matt Westman.

### D GRADE

This event provided another large field with fourteen facing the starter including 2015/17 Lakes D Grade winner Floyd Cowan, two further members of the Brigden family, Mum Cheryl, and twelve year old son Xavier, plus a relative newcomer to the sport Bendigo's third seeded David Drew, who started on the circuit this year and had reached the semi finals in all three events he had participated in.

The final stanza was played out by the indefatigable Drew and Cheryl Brigden, with Drew taking out the first game 21/11, before Brigden saved a match point to claim the second 22/21 and level the match, but it



was all Drew in the final game, storming to a commanding lead and capture it 21/3, and in the process becoming only the second Bendigo player to take out a GP singles title.

In their respective semi finals, Brigden overcame her Commercial Club stable mate Elsabe Du Plooy 21/8, 21/13, with Drew coming from a game down to oust second seeded Cowan, 18/21, 21/8, 21/18 and deny him the chance of capturing a third Lakes D grade title.

***David Drew & Michael Smits***

### E GRADE

Although the top seed for this event was Corio's Jackson Lander-Mitchell, who had to win the event to become this years GP Circuit champion, the field included a host of Gippsland players capable of reaching the pointy end of the event, which is what eventuated.

Two of Bairnsdale's GP debutants Corey Forrester and Jason Veith swept their way through the field to play out the event's final chapter, with Veith eventually overcoming the tenacious Forrester, 21/16, 15/21, 21/14.

In their penultimate matches, Forrester came from a game down to topple Lander-Mitchell, 15/21, 21/15, 21/16, with Veith doing likewise against third seeded Bairnsdale youngster Sam O'Kelly, 18/21, 21/8, 21/9.

## F Grade

Corio's Tegan Goulding has been limited participating in tournaments this year due to injury, but the season ended well for her taking out this event and winning her first GP Circuit title, when she defeated Lakes Entrance's Jed Key in the final, 21/9, 13/21, 21/8, with Corio's Hayley Thornley finishing in third place.



***Jed Key, Michael Smits, Tegan Goulding, Hayley Thornley***

## Junior Boy's/Girl's Under 13 Events

Amelia Brigden took out the Junior Girl's event, whilst four Lakes Entrance youngsters faced the starter for the Boy's event, and after six entertaining matches, Hayden Waddell was crowned the winner, taking out the final over Jed Key, 21/17, 21/18, with Aiden Bird finishing in third position.



***Hayden Waddell, Michael Smits, Jed Key & Amelia Brigden***

**RESULTS**

<b>SINGLES</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Runner-Up</b>
<b>Men's Open</b>	Ryan McCarter	Garry Pedersen
<b>Women's Open</b>	Judy Wright	Sue Dunlop
<b>A</b>	Clint Emery	Adam Lander
<b>B</b>	Jordan Rounds	Steve Theologou
<b>C</b>	Daniel Stedman	Alex Brigden
<b>D</b>	David Drew	Cheryl Brigden
<b>E</b>	Jason Veith	Corey Forrester
<b>F</b>	Tegan Goulding	Jed Key
<b>Junior Boy's U/13</b>	Hayden Waddell	Jed Key
<b>Junior Girl's U/13</b>	Amelia Brigden	X

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Runner-Up</b>
<b>Open</b>	Morris/Patterson	Edgley/Freshwater
<b>A</b>	Lander/Mitchell	X
<b>B</b>	J. Rounds/C. Rounds	Tiet/Tench
<b>C</b>	Fry/Smits	M. Brigden/A. Brigden
<b>D</b>	T. Waddell/C. Brigden	Dodson/Gourley
<b>E</b>	A. Brigden/X. Brigden	Carle/Dunk



**Open - Nathan Patterson, John Phillips, Charlie Stevenson, Mark Edgley, Cam Morris, Michael Smits**



***A Grade – Adam Lander, Elisha Mitchell, Michael Smits & Claire***



***B Grade-Matt Tench, Sylvia Tiet, Jordan & Chris Rounds, Michael Smits***



***C Grade – Glen Hofert, Trevor Rowe, Alex & Michael Brigden, Steve Fry, Michael Smits***



***D Grade - Sue Gourley, Bren Dodson, Cheryl Brigden, Sam O'Kelly, Troy Waddell, Michael Smits, Brendan O'Kelly***



***E Grade - Jed Key, Hayden Waddell, Frank Dunk, Amelia & Xavier Brigden, John Carle, Michael Smits***

**Words: Paul Vear**

**Photos: Courtesy of Samantha Walker**

**Special Presenters: Chris Fuhrmeister and Michael Smits**