

REVIEW OF 2018 GEELONG OPEN CLASSIC RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2018 edition of the Geelong Open Classic Racquetball Championships, played out at The Leisuretime Centre in Norlane, was highlighted by the stunning performances of seven times Australian Open Women's champion Judy Wright, who has only been beaten twice over the past three years in a Victorian Grand Prix Women's Open event, which was by Sarah Fitz-Gerald and Australian Commonwealth Games squash player Christine Nunn, recording her third Geelong Open title in a row, another herculean effort from Steve Andrewartha, who has been participating in tournaments and state pennant competitions for the past twenty years, claiming his second Geelong Open crown in the past three years, plus singles and doubles titles to fifteen year old Jack Quinlivan and Mulgrave's Amanda Pavia.

Popular Corio Racquetball Club committeeman Jon Perry was awarded the prestigious Corey Deery Memorial Sportsmanship Award.



Elisha Mitchell and Jon Perry

SINGLES EVENTS

MEN'S OPEN

L-R: Steve Andrewartha, Jon Perry & Garry Pedersen

Although Steve Andrewartha came into the Classic under an injury cloud, plus having to overcome a very strong field, he was still a warm favourite to take out this event being the current National and Victorian GP champion, with perennial finalist Garry Pedersen, Wangaratta Open winner Ryan McCarter and Darwin Open champion Peter French expected to be his toughest opposition, which is how it unfolded.

Andrewartha overcame Ballarat stalwart Darren O'Donnell in the quarters, then French in their semi final, 21/16, 18/21, 21/12, whilst Pedersen ousted Wagga's Craig Ambler in their quarter final encounter, before taking revenge on McCarter in the semis for his narrow three game loss to him in the Wangaratta Open final, winning 21/11, 16/21, 21/15.



The final stanza had everything, but Andrewartha with his impeccable driving tightness and length, plus a very accurate short game, made it impossible for Pedersen to take control at any stage of the first game.

To his credit, Pedersen courageously fought back in the second game going virtually point for point, but Andrewartha hung on, claiming the forty third point of that game and the match, 21/13, 22/21.

WOMEN'S OPEN



Mary Sceney & Judy Wright

Australian Open Women's champion Judy Wright (1996/97 & 2002-2006), stormed through the field to record her zillionth tournament title, winning all three of her matches in straight games, although in what turned out to be the decider, was extended all the way by last year's runner-up Mary Sceney, but finally saluting the judge, and taking out her third consecutive Geelong title, 21/18, 21/18.

Recent Darwin Open winner Sue Dunlop overcame 2017 National and Victorian GP champion Kristel Proctor, 21/14, 21/15, to claim third placing, plus leaving her in top position on the 2018 Victorian GP rankings.

A Grade



Matt Bayley, Elisha Mitchell & Travis Rhodes

Although an extremely strong A Grade field faced the starter, three players had interesting form lines coming into this event; Daniel Lewis who had annexed the two previous Victorian A Grade titles in 2018, Matt Bayley who made his GP debut in C Grade just sixteen months ago, and was a close runner – up to Lewis at the Wangaratta Event, and Travis Rhodes who is Geelong's number one squash player, but little experience in racquetball events.

In the top half of the draw, Lewis and Bayley came together at the semi final stage after completing straight game wins over Warrnambool's Tim Milne and Corio's Ash Foord in their respective quarter finals, and after a compelling eighty minute encounter Bayley triumphed. 21/17, 3/21, 21/16.

In the bottom half of the draw Rhodes was creating considerable havoc despatching Wangaratta's third seeded Dean Milligan and Corio's second seeded Adam Lander both in straight games, to join Bayley at the pointy end of the event.

Bayley and Rhodes went "toe to toe" in the first game with the fourth seeded Bayley finally claiming it 21/17, but Rhodes bounced back in the second game and was never headed, taking it 21/7, and setting up a tantalising finale.

The third game mirrored the first one and went virtually the full distance before Bayley claimed the 106th point and the match, 21/17, 7/21, 21/19.

B Grade

Over the past six months Lakes Entrances's Steve Theologou has been one of the sport's big improvers and had won the ESRA and Wangaratta B Grade titles in 2018 and was top seed for this event, although the field contained last year's winner Jacob Van Der Vegt, plus two very highly rated junior squash players, thirteen year old Andre Lynn and fifteen year old Jack Quinlivan.

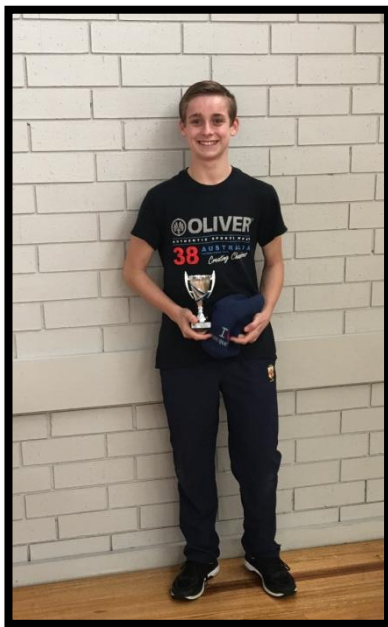
Theologou started off impressively with a close win over Westerfold Bayswater's Marcus Horvat at the quarter final stage, but then ran into Lynn, who was on a roll having already put paid to fourth seeded Lance Cowan and third seeded Blake Caspersz in earlier rounds both in three games, at the penultimate stage.

Lynn showed great skill and character for his age, coming from a game down against Theologou, before finally succumbing, 10/21, 21/18, 16/21.

Meanwhile Quinlivan was cutting a swathe through the bottom half of the draw which included taking out Corio's fifth seeded John Phillips and second seeded Van Der Vegt, both in straight games.

After nearly seventy five minutes of unbelievable rallies, comebacks and counter punching, Quinlivan emerged the victor, 21/11, 16/21, 21/19, and underlining a very strong future ahead for him in the sport.

Quinlivan made it a unique double when partnering Wodonga's Campbell Shobbrook to victory in the B Grade doubles event, a great effort for his first GP tournament.



Jack Quinlivan



Elisha Mitchell & Steve Theologou

C GRADE

One of the great stories of our sport over the past few months has been the development of the Bendigo Racquetball Club with programs run by Anthony Dzioba and fully supported by Centre Manager Russell McLean and their Committee, which led to the club having five members participating in the Classic.

One of the great promoters of our sport Commercial Club Albury's Ross Falconer headed up the seedings for this event, with Dzioba, Corio's Brad Morgan, and Bendigo's Grant Bradley being 2nd, 3rd and 4th seeds respectively.



Anthony Dzioba, Elisha Mitchell & Grant Bradley

The top four seeds in this event made it to the penultimate stage with only Morgan being taken to three games by Corio's Steven Legg in their quarter final, eventually surviving in a marathon, 22/21 in the third.

Bradley defeated Falconer and Dzioba ousted Morgan in their respective semi finals which brought together the Bendigo stable mates to fight out the event's climax, creating history as it was the first time ever that two players from that club have played off in a racquetball tournament final.

The first game went point for point for the full distance with Bradley taking it out 22/21, then claiming the second game 21/15, and the title.

D GRADE

On paper this event was one of the toughest to call but in the end it was one of the sport's most prolific tournament players and valued supporter, South Australian Brian Richards, and a relative newcomer to GP events Commercial Club's Paul Morgan, who reached the decider, with Morgan prevailing, 21/18, 21/15.

To reach the final, Morgan came from a game down to overcome Bendigo's David Drew, 13/21, 21/17, 21/10, with Richards doing likewise over Bairnsdale's second seeded Chris Kool, 19/21, 21/9, 21/13.



Paul Morgan & Elisha Mitchell



Brian Richards, Elisha Mitchell & Emily Cooper

E GRADE

This event was a war of attrition with each player having to survive three matches, with the second youngest player in the field, Corio's fourteen year old Brayden Webber taking it out over Westerfolds Bayswater's Jacqueline Wilcock, 21/8, 21/12, and recording his first GP singles title, and Corio's thirteen year old Jackson Lander-Mitchell taking out third placing over Bendigo's Thomas Chen.



Brayden Webber & Elisha Mitchell

Jackson Lander-Mitchell, Elisha Mitchell & Jacqueline Wilcock

F Grade

Excepting for Mulgrave's Amanda Pavia and Westerfolds Bayswater's Jessica Wilcock, this was an all Geelong affair with one of the outsiders Pavia taking out the final, 21/15, 21/15, and denying local hope Tegan Goulding her first GP title, with Wilcock accounting for another local Danica Morgan to claim third placing. Pavia also took out the E Grade Doubles with Mulgrave's Marguerite Lee to record a tournament double.



Tegan Goulding, Elisha Mitchell & Amanda Pavia

SINGLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Men's Open	Steve Andrewartha	Garry Pedersen
Women's Open	Judy Wright	Mary Sceney
A	Matt Bayley	Travis Rhodes
B	Jack Quinlivan	Steve Theologou
C	Grant Bradley	Anthony Dzioba
D	Paul Morgan	Brian Richards
E	Brayden Webber	Jacqueline Wilcock
F	Amanda Pavia	Tegan Goulding

DOUBLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Open	C. Stevenson/D. O'Donnell	J. & H. Bosch
A	L. Faustini/J. Perry	R. Cooper/M. Bayley
B	C. Shobbrook/J. Quinlivan	J. Phillips/S. Dunlop
C	B. Jacimovic/A. Lynn	A. Dzioba/G. Bradley
D	B. Richards/E. Cooper	R. Toogood/S. Crawford
E	A. Pavia/M. Lee	J. & J. Wilcock



Open Doubles: Hendrix Bosch, Charlie Stevenson, Elisha Mitchell, Darren O'Donnell & Jon Bosch



A Grade Doubles: Leon Faustini, Elisha Mitchell & Jon Perry Rayleen Cooper, Elisha Mitchell & Matt Bayley



B Grade Doubles: John Phillips, Jack Quinlivan, Campbell Shobbrook & Elisha Mitchell (Absent: Sue Dunlop)



C Grade Doubles: Anthony Dzioba, Andre Lynn, Ben Jacimovic & Grant Bradley



D Grade Doubles: Brian Richards, Elisha Mitchell & Emily Cooper Rob Toogood, & Sharyn Crawford



E Grade Doubles: Marguerite Lee, Jon Perry & Amanda Pavia Jessica & Jacqueline Wilcock

Words: Paul Vear

Special Presenters: Elisha Mitchell & Jon Perry

Photos: courtesy of Ben Bell, Ross Falconer, Matt Bayley & Jackson Lander-Mitchell