

- **REVIEW OF 2017 GEELONG OPEN CLASSIC RACQUETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The 2017 edition of the Geelong Open Classic Racquetball Championships, played out at The Leisuretime Centre in Norlane, was highlighted by the stunning performances of nineteen year old South African squash player Callan Hall, leaving a strong Men's Open Singles field in his wake, and also capturing the Open Doubles championship with five times Australian Open Singles champion Geoff Wilcock, 2016 Victorian Grand Prix Circuit Women's Open champion Judy Wright annexing another Open title, plus the efforts of Lakes Entrance duo Jacob Van Der Vegt, who claimed a unique treble by winning the B Grade singles title after capturing the Geelong C Grade event in 2015 and 2016, and fifteen year old Jarrod Marturano winning both the E Grade singles and the D Grade doubles with South Australian stalwart Brian Richards.

SINGLES EVENTS

MEN'S OPEN



L-R: Adam Lander, Callan Hall, Garry Pedersen, Charlie Stevenson

Although Steve Andrewartha came into the Geelong Classic under an injury cloud, he was still a warm favourite to take it out as he had won the past six Victorian GP Men's Open titles, with perennial finalist Peter French seeded to reach another final at least.

Similar to our topsy-turvy AFL season this event was turned on its head by South African Callan Hall who stormed through three matches without losing a game, which included second seeded French and fourth seeded Tasmanian Matt Creely, prior to fronting third seeded Garry Pedersen in the final chapter.

With all the mayhem happening in the bottom half of the draw, Pedersen who had recently returned from a three week training camp in Singapore, was quietly working his way through the top half of the draw, although his tough semi final encounter with Andrewartha was unfortunately terminated at one game all, after the top seed suffered an abductor muscle injury.

The final stanza had everything, but Hall with his impeccable width and length, plus a very accurate short game, made it virtually impossible for Pedersen to take control of the match at any stage finally succumbing to the South African, 21/13, 21/14.

WOMEN'S OPEN



L-R: Elisha Mitchell, Judy Wright



L-R: Elisha Mitchell, Mary Sceney

Seven times Australian Open Women's champion Judy Wright has only been beaten twice in a Women's Open event over the past eighteen months which has been by Sarah Fitz-Gerald and top women's squash player Christine Nunn, which meant Wright started a short priced favourite to make it back to back Geelong Open titles.

One "smokey" in this field was former world top ten squash player Mary Sceney and after accounting for second seeded Kristel Proctor in their semi final and Wright easing part her opponents, great interest was gathering around the women's final.

As her record shows, Wright is cool under any pressure and once again took control early and never relinquished her lead to claim the final 21/9, 21/10, and Sceney's performances underlined a strong future ahead for her in the sport.

A Grade



L-R: Adam Lander, Anthony Hain

Although an extremely strong A Grade field faced the starter, two players had outstanding form lines coming into this event, with Anthony Hain in his past two events, including the 2016 Australian Open, losing only to Alex Baines who won the 2016 Australian Open A Grade crown, whilst Foord was runner up in this event last year in a three game encounter to current Open player Tom Kelson.

This time the seedings held up and to reach the event's climax, Hain overcame Tasmanian fifth seeded Joe Carter, 22/21, 21/14, whilst Foord survived a marathon over Wangaratta's third seeded Dean Milligan, 21/12, 21/22, 21/18, in their respective semi finals.

In the first game Hain established an early lead which he steadily increased, but the second was a cliff hanger until near the closing stages when Hain took over to secure the match, 21/12, , 21/17, and claim his first Victorian GP title.

B Grade



L-R: Jacob Van Der Vegt, Adam Lander, Dave Whan

During 2015/16 Lakes Entrance's Jacob Van Der Vegt played a total of six C grade events winning two of them, both at the Geelong Open, then in his final event last year moved into B grade and Geelong this year was his second attempt in the grade.

The top seed for this event was Sth Australian Dave Whan who is using racquetball as a major part of his training regime to conquer Mt Everest in October this year just prior to the Australian Open in Albury, to become the first person ever to climb Everest then win an Australian Open Racquetball or Squash Championship over a three week period.

Whilst Whan was methodically working his way through the top half of the draw, Van Der Vegt was cutting a swathe through the bottom half, which included taking out Wangaratta's third seeded Jason Hawkins and Mulgrave's Matt Bayley, who had ousted second seeded Peter Walters, both in straight games, to join Whan at the pointy end of the event.

After nearly sixty five minutes of unbelievable rallies, comebacks and counter punching, Van Der Vegt climbed over Whan to claim the seventy ninth points and the match, 21/19, 21/18, plus record his third GP title in a row at Geelong. Who says players don't have favourite venues.

C GRADE



L-R: Adam Lander, Blake Caspersz, Michael Smits

Lakes Entrance's 2016 Victorian C Grade GP Champion Michael Smits, and Ballarat's rapidly improving Blake Caspersz were seeded to meet in the final of this event, although there were many of the sport's stalwarts to overcome.

Whilst Smits was falling over the line against Lakes Entrance legend and stable mate Chris Fuhrmeister 21/15 in the third game, then overcoming fourth seeded Rayleen Cooper, Caspersz was putting the sword to all and sundry in the bottom half of the draw, including Corio's Brandon Morgan and Warrnambool's Peter Molan in straight games.

As with many other singles contests at this event, the final was another lengthy encounter with Caspersz finally capturing the match, 22/20, 21/15, and in the process his second GP title in a row.

D GRADE



L-R: Elisha Mitchell, Gerard Hall



L-R: Adam Lander, Brian Richards

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 Warrnambool's Gerard Hall who reached the decider.

After taking out sixth seeded Graham Argent, Richards overpowered Wangaratta's "Godmother" of the sport, Heather Williams, 21/13, 21/11, whilst Hall overcame Lakes Entrance's Kevin Till, 21/13, 15/21, 21/11 in the quarters, then ousted Corio's top seeded Ben Bell 21/14, 21/7.

Hall captured his first GP title when he survived a three game encounter, 21/16, 15/21, 21/14, and deny the popular South Australian an interstate victory.

E GRADE



L-R: Adam Lander, Jarrod Marturano

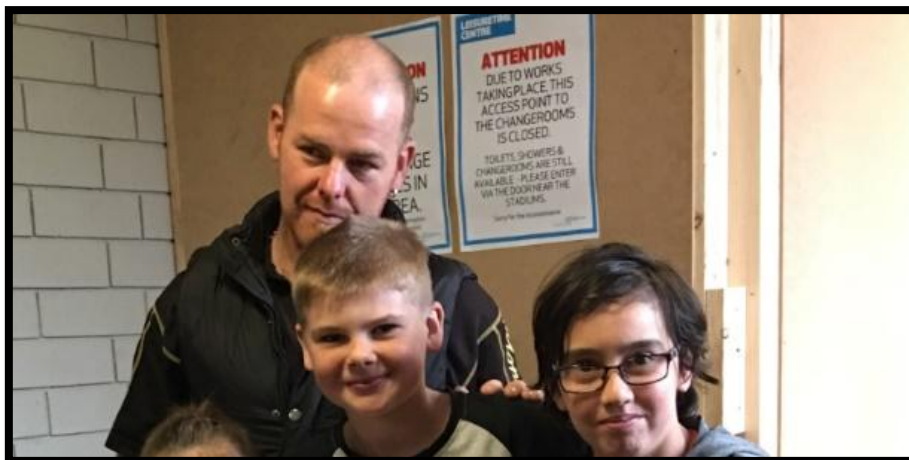


L-R: Elisha Mitchell, Emily Cooper

This event was a war of attrition with each player having to survive four matches, with the second youngest player in the field, Lakes Entrance's Jarrod Marturano taking it out, over Mulgrave's second seeded Emily

Cooper, 21/11, 22/21, and recording his first GP singles title, then also claimed the D Grade doubles event partnering Brian Richards.

F Grade



L-R: Adam Lander, Jackson Lander-Mitchell, Ella Partington

This was an all Geelong round robin event with Jackson Lander-Mitchell finishing on top over his Corio team mates Danica Morgan and Ella Partington, defeating Danica in the final, 21/13, 21/12.

SINGLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Men's Open	Callan Hall	Garry Pedersen
Women's Open	Judy Wright	Mary Sceney
A	Anthony Hain	Ash Foord
B	Jacob Van Der Vegt	Dave Whan
C	Blake Caspersz	Michael Smits
D	Gerard Hall	Brian Richards
E	Jarrold Marturano	Emily Cook
F	Jackson Lander-Mitchell	Danica Morgan

DOUBLES		
Grade	Winner	Runner-Up
Open	C. Hall/G. Wilcock	C. Stevenson/D. O'Donnell
A	A. Lander/J. Perry	A. Hain/K. Proctor
B	D. Whan/A. Lynn	J. Van Der Vegt/J. Peterson
C	R. Cooper/M. Bayley	R. Falconer/B.Caspersz
D	B. Richards/J. Marturano	E. Cooper/B.Bayley
E	E. Partington/J. Lander-Mitchell	-

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Special Presenters: Elisha Mitchell & Adam Lander

Photos: Courtesy of Kylie Harvey