

# Bowls Uncut

with Matt Flapper



Seventeen teams across nine of the twentyfour Geelong Region clubs are celebrating premierships success following the culmination of both Midweek and Saturday pennant competitions.

Earlier in the week City of Geelong stole the headlines and maybe surprised themselves for their remarkable performance to take out the Division 1 Midweek premiership. "We were a little surprised to be honest but at the same time we knew we had a good enough team, we just had to believe" said City of Geelong's champion skipper Lorraine Myers. The premiers fell into the top four after entering the final home and away match in fifth position and then went on a rampage tumbling all above them which included Queenscliff, Torquay and minor premiers Ocean Grove to finish as the best. "Celebrations were big back at the club, lots of singing and a few beverages of course" Myers added. City of Geelong will now head to Moama in May in the hopes of bringing a State Pennant title back to Geelong. "We have been lucky enough to have been there before, our experience last time will certainly help us" the City skipper added. Not only in Division 1 did the minor premiers fall at the final hurdle but also in Division 2 when Highton powered home in the final two games of the season. The Hawks collected the first of their two midweek premierships along with Division 4 with a win against Geelong at Geelong who finished second on the ladder then a Grand final where they powered home in the final stages to knock off Belmont.

"Although Belmont were clear favourites given their terrific home and away season our side had beaten them at Belmont earlier, our players had the confidence" said Highton's Chris Hodges. Highton enjoyed a good run of form since the Christmas break. "We definitely had some momentum and there was a positive attitude amongst the players" Hodges added. Highton will now have two sides competing in the top level of the Midweek competition next season.

It's fair to say Bell Post Hill were hit with some pre match challenges in Division 3 but Craig McCarron said his side were determined. "We won the premiership in Div. 3 last year but unfortunately there was no promotion so we were determined to go back to back but more importantly earn that promotion to Div. 2 next

season". The Panthers were the best side all season but prior to the match McCarron said they had a few hiccups. "We lost a player to illness the night before and then on arrival believe it or not we had one of our skips hit by a reversing bus in the car park, probably not the ideal preparation but luckily we were able to regroup" McCarron said.

Celebrations for the champion team went well into the night. "We all went back to the club then everyone went out to the Fyansford pub until close, good fun" McCarron added.

As mentioned above Highton captured Division 4 after topping the ladder all season whilst a premiership double was earned for Ocean Grove in Divisions 5 and 6 with grand final wins against Drysdale and Geelong respectively.

The top two teams went head to head in Division 7 with minor premiers Portarlington adding a plaque to their trophy cabinet finishing ahead of City of Geelong.

Celebrations went long into the night as Ocean Grove rewrote the history books last weekend with double success in taking out the regions Premier Division and Division 1 premierships. The competitions top two teams Ocean Grove and defending champions Highton locked horns and traded blow for blow throughout the 84-end final. "The match seesawed throughout the afternoon before we rallied to make a charge towards the final stages" said Ocean Grove Skipper Peter Loe. Loe himself in his second season with the club led the way with his nine shot rink win which proved crucial to his sides success "We finished strong luckily, it was a tough battle" he added. Brad Pavey led his side of Wade Bowyer, former Victorian representative Ken Thomas and Glenn Baudinette to a five shot win against the in-form and dangerous Highton coach Dan Priddle. "Drysdale live-streamed this game, it was broadcast with a large number of viewers tuning in, Brad skipped brilliantly, he has developed into one of our regions best players" Loe added.

Ocean Grove have now won the opportunity to replicate their 2013 efforts when they climbed the pinnacle of pennant bowls in Victoria taking out the state pennant title. The event will be played on May 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Moama Bowls Club.

David Rudge, Ron Brown, Dave Meeny and Luke Benson took control of the Division 1 grand final in the closing stage to ensure the Grover's double success "It was amazing, I am so thrilled for the team and the club" said winning skipper Benson.

Not many punters would have waged on the Grovers against their more fancied opponents Torquay and six weeks ago they may have not even been in the conversation. "We staggered into the final four, we needed two rink wins against Leopold in the last home and away game and literally scrapped through" Benson added.

The cut throat finals series did not prove favourable to the minor premiers St Leonards after succumbing to the Grovers in semi-final one whilst Torquay advanced to the finale with a home win against Highton. "We had a big win against St Leonards, that gave us belief and instilled the confidence that we could do it again against Torquay" Benson said.

The result will now see Ocean Grove again field two Premier Division sides next season and with the regions controversial decision to reduce the Premier Division sides from sixteen to twelve it could be interesting to see how it unfolds.

Finals can create moments that will be talked about for many years to come and for the Lara Jets in Division 2 it's no different. Lara's final home and away game against Bannockburn was a grand final in itself. "The last win of the season was great, the winner kept their season alive and our form had been really strong over the back half of the season, going into finals the club was on a high" said Lara's Keith Sanderson.

Lara have certainly had their challenges throughout the season with covid and other club related matters proving disruptive at times but Sanderson said the feeling amongst the members post the grand final win was amazing. "We have been heavily impacted at times, we started the season with six sides and finished off lucky to fill our fourth side. As normal we showed our resilience and the reward was a great night of celebrations with club legend Tom Seddon leading our club song" Sanderson added.

The Jets will now head back into Division 1 "having div 1 is crucial to our long term success, it gives us a greater potential to recruit as well" Sanderson commented.

Whilst Lara enjoy the spoils it's quite the opposite for Geelong who were left licking their wounds. "The club was shattered, we will

let the dust settle for a few weeks and then debrief and plan for next season" Geelong's Adam Green said. Bouncing back from the Division 2 grand final loss will be even tougher next season according to Green. "Changes to local pennant rules will make it even harder for clubs like us to progress division wise" he added.

Eastern Park proved too strong against Portarlington in Division 4 and for Port they were left disappointed with their three grand final teams all falling at the final hurdle. Aside from Division 4 they could not get over the line against Highton in Division 6 and Torquay in Division 10.

Highton cleaned up Division 5, 6 and 8/9 whilst Drysdale got some silverware in their Division 7 grand finale against St Leonards.