

Tennis teams rally through injuries

Game, set and match

Upper Hutt tennis has continued to build on its success last season, fielding teams in both the Wellington ASB Regional and Hutt Valley interclub competitions.

While not achieving the milestones of 2008-09, partly due to retirements and injuries sustained by some of its senior campaigners, Upper Hutt has

performed creditably with its regional three men's side performing strongly and pushing all the way for promotion.

The regional three side of Michael McGlinchey, David Quinn, Lucas Miller and Scott Hunter needed to win their last game to finish in the top four but narrowly failed and finished fifth in a tightly contested competition.

Although subject to official confirmation, it looks like they just missed out on the opportunity of playing in regional two in the new year.

"The season has been more of a struggle than anticipated because of retirements and injuries, but we remain optimistic," club captain Mike Quinn says.

"It was good seeing our relatively young regional three side push for promotion to the very end. Scott Hunter led the boys well and their success augurs well

for the future of our club as it encourages other juniors.

"Our junior club is stronger this year and seeing our young senior players give such a good account of themselves can only motivate them."

The women's regional one team (Nichola Boyles, Michelle Barr, Karen Martin, Dale and Sophie Ritossa and Tania Martin) also did well, recording two wins and showing enough form to give the club confidence they will hold on to their regional one status.

The regional two men's team of Denzil Boyles, Josh Hinton, Conor Quinn and Simon Osborne had to contend with injuries this year and did not quite reach the same level of success as last year.

"We're hoping they do well after Christmas and keep their spot in regional two," Quinn says.

The club is also well represented in Hutt Valley interclub competition, fielding a men's division one team, two men's division two teams and three women's division one teams.

Kiwi gunners ready to blaze

By COLIN WILLIAMS

Ten days of national and international quality rifle shooting competition begins at Trentham's Seddon Range on Friday morning.

The NZ National Rifle Association is holding its renowned Ballinger Belt championships which culminates on Saturday week with the Queens Final shoot for the prestigious belt, recognised as one of the longest established sporting events and trophy in the country.

Fifty marksmen and women will contest the Queens Final shoot, qualifying on, and carrying through, their aggregate scores.

These are the individual results over three days and a number of shoots over different distances, and given Trentham's fickle reputation, varying wind and weather conditions.

The Queens Fifty will have played through from a field expected to be more than 150-strong and also including a strong representation from Australia.

The Ballinger Belt is held by Victoria's David Rich, who prevailed last year to head off the experienced Te Puke shooter Mike Collings.

The Ballinger Belt competition begins a week today, with two shoots over 300 and 600 metres.

There is also plenty of action at the Seddon range ahead of the event, including this Friday and Saturday's New Zealand 300

metre championships.

There's particular interest in a genuine international with a match between New Zealand and British sides starting at 9am on Monday.

Thirteen British shooters will be in action with only three making their debuts for their country, NRA championship manager Alan Whiteman says.

With seven officials including four coaches, there is a 20-person contingent set on taking out the honours here and getting in some experience in New Zealand and then Australian conditions.

The New Zealand team for the international event has been named.

It is captained by Tony Loughnan and coached by Ross Geange and John Snowden.

Ten shooters are included: Ken Chittock, Di Collings, Mike Collings, Rick Fincham, Casey Goldsmith, Rob Johansen, Pat Law, Bevan Mehrtens, Richard Rowlands and Cathy Smith.

If the belt fits: The 2009 Ballinger Belt winner, Australian David Rich, gets the traditional winner's lift. Who will be sitting in the coveted wooden seat on Saturday week at the completion of the belt's Queens Final afternoon shoot?



SPORTS SHORTS

Football class

St Pat's College, Silverstream is one of three venues across the country hosting special "football talent centres".

Along with Silverstream, two other camps will be at Auckland Grammar and St Bede's College in Christchurch, starting Monday.

New Zealand Football recently announced the development initiative to speed up the international progress of New Zealand teams at the age-grade level.

The first intake will see about 300 boys and girls, aged from 12 to 16, getting a first taste of the level of preparation required to reach the under-17 squads of the future.

New Zealand Football's aim is to identify and nurture talented young players from as early as 12 years

old and prepare them for FIFA World Cups at the under-17 and under-20 levels.

Talent scouts have identified players at national age-grade tournaments.

Numbers have been boosted locally by recognised footballing prospects selected by federation coaching staff.

Rennie takes it away

Manawatu-based Upper Hutt rugby export Dave Rennie deservedly took away the Coach of the Year title at the recent 2009 New Zealand Steinlager Rugby Awards. Rennie, a former Upper Hutt player (and coach) who had more than 50 games in the midfield for the Wellington Lions in the mid-1980s, took the New Zealand under-20 side to his second IRB

Junior World Championships in Japan in the middle of last year. A former Lions head coach – the last to take out a provincial championship – and a Hurricanes assistant, Rennie has been in charge of the Manawatu Turbos in recent seasons and, now the province's playing future is assured, he remains contracted to continue in that role.

There's increasing speculation he may apply for, and be in the strong running to get, the head Hurricanes position in 2011, following Colin Cooper's extended reign.

Nominations for the Super 14 franchise role close later this month and any appointment would preclude Rennie from continuing with Manawatu this year. "I have made a commitment to Manawatu to be there next year

and you can't do both roles," Rennie was reported saying. Either way, his coaching stocks are at a high level with his work with the national under-20 sides an important dynamic in the country's overall playing strength and development. And whatever his coaching obligations, Rennie will continue in another, perhaps more important rugby role... as one of the regular experts in the *Upper Hutt Leader* Rugby Jackpot, a position he has filled with authority for several years.

Fisher on the move

Upper Hutt Swimming's Mary Fisher recently won two bronze medals at the Paralympic Games world short course championships in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Mary, who is visually impaired, won medals in the 100 metre butterfly and the 100m backstroke, her favourite event. The Heretaunga College student, soon to start year 13, is now aiming for the London 2012 Paralympic Games, buoyed by her success.

The Silverstream teenager's other main ambitions are to swim good enough times at the upcoming national championships to qualify for the British Paralympic Championships in Sheffield and the Paralympic Games world championships in the Netherlands.

Both events take place later this year. Mary, who late last year won College Sport Wellington's female athlete with a disability award is one of Upper Hutt's inaugural youth ambassadors.