

NEW ZEALAND YOUTH SET THE STAGE FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE



Matt Gallop and Mandy Boyd with their medals.



Mandy Boyd with her competitive face on.



Matt Gallop with Malaysia's Hizlee Rais.

By Nicole Fearon

The 5th Asia Pacific Merdeka Indoor Bowls Championships saw some impressive results for two of New Zealand's top youth players, Mandy Boyd and Matt Gallop. The pair were playing their first international competition at the open level, and produced results which they and the rest of New Zealand can be very proud of.

Mandy started strong - winning two of her first three games, and losing only to top Malaysian player Nor Zafirah. Mandy then faced some tough competition taking on Australia's Claire Duke, whom she had to beat to qualify. It was a tight game with Mandy losing the tie break 4 - 1, Claire went on to win the women's singles. "There was strong competition there...particularly for Mandy with the strength and depth of the Malaysian team", competition coach Sharon Sims comments.

While Mandy battled tough competition Matt also had to battle a wet indoor green "I was not expecting the green to get wet when you're playing indoors" he joked. Even so Matt played some superb bowls against his world class competition, defeating world number nine, Australian Anthony Kiepe in the semis, and placing second in the men's singles, behind Malaysia's Hizlee Rais. And the game he enjoyed the most? "Beating Australia in the semi finals, just because it was Australia".

Mandy and Matt placed third equal in the mixed pairs, after a 15-12 loss to Duke and Kiepe in the semi finals. Sharon Sims comments that how well the two combined in the pairs was a real highlight for her. The two bowlers have nothing but praise for each other with both describing the other as being "good to play with". Matt went on to say, "I think Mandy has a big future for NZ; she has a lot of talent".

The performance of these two players demonstrates the depth of talent within NZ's youth players and as Sharon points out the benefit of exposing young players to these environments is that "they get a taste for international competition, and are able to take advantage of the strong competition there". From the performances demonstrated in Merdeka it is clear that these two players have a long career ahead of them.