

# TOP TEENAGE TALENT

## COMPETES AT KITTYHAWKS

By Crispin Anderlini

*Surrounded by the rolling green of Lloyd Ellsmore's Park in Pakuranga, the young athletes competing in the Kittyhawks National Under 20 Singles tournament were free to cheer, shout and live it up - but the elite teenaged bowlers were there for business; and it was Sheldon Bagrie-Howley (Southland) and Mandy Boyd (Wellington) that proved to have the right skills for the job.*

As New Zealand's premier under-20 event, the Kittyhawks annual event is a showcase for the young and the brilliant. It is also the pool of talent from which New Zealand's younger representatives are often plucked; and this year's talent pool was even deeper than in previous years with the standard of play being truly remarkable amongst even the youngest players on the greens.

Winner of the oversized championship trophy in the Men's section, Bagrie-Howley is just 16-years-old. But with five years of experience, and a fair amount of natural ability, the Gore teenager was in searing form against bowlers like Monte Pawa (Far North) - who he defeated in the quarterfinal, 8-6, 6-11, 5-1. Meeting Robbie Reed (Canterbury) in the final, the riveting match was one of the best of the tournament. Ending in a 10-9, 10-8 win for the Southland bowler, it was a fantastic display of skill and ability, with both young men in top form.

However, the younger bowler is amazed at what he has achieved. "I'm surprised I made here at all. I didn't think I would get this far. The level of competition here is really high, and I was pretty nervous playing Monte Pawa in the quarterfinal. But I'm rapt that I won. It's the biggest thing I've ever won, but I'm hoping to play for New Zealand next."

Already an NZ representative, Mandy Boyd is no stranger to such high levels of competition. Nonetheless, it has been a particularly great year of bowls for the Wellington university student. She began 2011 with a national title in the Fours at the Hyundai National Open Championships, travelled offshore to take an international title in Adelaide at the U25

Trans Tasman Test Series, and returned home to successfully defend another NZ title at the Kittyhawks tournament. And being Boyd's final year in the event, there is no better way to go out than with your crown intact.

"It's a really great way to end the season. It's great tournament, and I've been here four times. I'm going to miss it," says the talented bowler.

"This tournament's been really good. Every game I've played has been so close. Every game has been really tough," she says. In particular, her semifinal game against young and unbeaten Cantabrian star Tayla Bruce - earning a straight sets victory over the 16-year-old (11-7, 10-10), Boyd admits that it was no sure thing.

"She played really well and it was a great game. I won the first set and drew the second one, but it could have gone either way."

"The final was special, though, because I played my good friend Jacqui [Whitburn]. It's been one of our dreams to play each other like this, and she played a great game." Boyd won another straight sets victory in the final, 11-6, 10-5, to earn the top placing and take a big step closer to selection for the NZ team (senior) - a dream she wants to see fulfilled.

In the Women's Plate competition, it was Kelly Brenton (Nelson) that took the silverware from local bowler Robertalyn Bristowe (Counties-Manukau), 13-7, 9-7, while Wellingtonian Tim Toomey used the power of his straight-shooting drive and the finesse of his drawing game to roll out another Counties-Manukau bowler, Bevan Beckham, in a seemingly relaxed match that went his way in straight sets, 11-8, 10-6.



*Tim Toomey, Sheldon Bagrie-Howley, Mandy Boyd, and Kelly Brenton*

