

Young-Pires Measure Up

With a combined age of just 46, three 'young-pires' measured up when an umpires examination was held recently in Tauranga, joining the ranks of level 1 full umpires – growing the number of young people wanting to become umpires and give back to the sport.

Talor Duncan (16) first started playing outdoor bowls in 2009. He comments, "I decided to become an umpire so that I can further myself in the sport and give back to the people that have influenced and helped me the most. This would also help me in my own game by being able to measure and know what I can and can't do while on the green."

Preparation for the exam was covered by ten 2 hour tutorial sessions held over 10 weeks. In addition there was a morning session on the green to cover practical aspects that could not be done in the classroom.

"The course was not what I had expected and was incredibly interesting," Talor said, "The course covered everything you needed to know and more, but was very simple and well laid-out. If you have been bowling for any length of time I believe you should understand and be aware of the Laws of Bowls."

Becoming an umpire at the age of 16 does come with its own unique set of challenges, but Talor says he expects that some people will see his age as a barrier and may not "want to trust someone as young as me with a very important decision." The group's tutor, Des French, added "They will face the same challenges as all new umpires - to learn to officiate without being officious and to gain the confidence of players by demonstrating their knowledge of the Laws and their competency in carrying out a measure. Being young, that challenge will be just that little bit more difficult especially if they have to deal with players who have



Talor Duncan (Gate Pa) in action.

a prejudice against being umpired by someone much younger than them. Not having had the life experience of dealing with different people may add another challenge."

Talor was joined by Nathan Arlidge and Stefan McCartain, both fifteen years old and members of Gate Pa Bowling Club. All three passed the examination easily and proved themselves to be very capable candidates. Des comments, "Their examination results show that they have the knowledge of the laws and are very competent in measuring situations. All three of them have a quiet self-confidence and with some mentoring along the way they are more than capable of meeting these challenges."

Bowls really is no longer just for nana's – Talor comments "I cannot speak highly enough about bowling, it is not the stereotyped "Old Person" day out anymore. Yes I get all the granddad jokes

but this is before they have tried it. But when people do try it, 90% enjoy it and stick with the sport." Now that goes for umpiring too! Des explains, "Having this group of young umpires in the centre is another step along the way of showing the community that bowls truly is a sport for all ages. Hopefully it will encourage other young players to become involved and help ensure the future of the sport of bowls."

Helen Stallard of the Bowls NZ Umpires Committee adds, "It is great to have younger players sitting their umpire's exams. The course will help them with their own bowls but it will also be fantastic to have some more young umpires who can develop through the new umpire's pathway to reach Level 3 and 4. Youth bowls is so popular now and it will be good to be able to appoint their peers as the umpires at these tournaments."