

Family's history-making charge

Whanganui whānau clean up at Māori Tennis Champs

Tennis
Iain Hyndman

For the first time in history, one extended family has dominated the Aotearoa Māori Tennis Championship, winning all five open titles on offer at the prestigious tournament.

The closely-related Hourigan and Butters clans gave visitors no chance in the open sections in the 2020 version of the classic tournament, this time hosted by their home club, the Whanganui Tennis Club.

It was the first time Whanganui had hosted the Aotearoa Māori Tennis Championship for 93 years.

New Zealand female No1 Paige Hourigan was the first family winner, beating three-time tournament woman's singles winner and former top four New Zealand tennis player Lucy Barlow, from Waikato, 6/1 6/1.

Hourigan was in devastating form and followed it by winning the doubles title.

Teaming up with cousin Paris Butters, they won the final against Jane Wylie and Tania Martin Phillips 6/1 6/1.

Then up stepped Hourigan's cousin and Paris Butters' brother, Kyle Butters. In a hard-fought match, he beat Jayden Harrison (Taranaki) 6/2 6/4 in the men's singles final.

Harrison has been offered three tennis university scholarships to the states and will head off this year.

Kyle Butters has won the Māori tournament men's singles title seven times.

He then teamed up with his older brother, Sam, in the men's doubles final to beat a talented pairing from Waikato and Hawke's Bay, of River Apatu and Phillip Warren 6/1 6/2. This was the Butters brothers' fourth Māori doubles title.

That just left the mixed doubles title to win.



Whanganui ace and Kiwi No1 Paige Hourigan led the history-making family charge to win all five open titles at the Aotearoa Māori Tennis Championships on home soil this week. Hourigan won the women's singles and the women's doubles.

Kyle Butters teamed up with nervous sister Paris to play Phillip Warren and Pacifica representative and sister

Mahinarangi Warren in the final. Kyle Butters' class was a step up from the rest and the steadiness of Paris won

them their fourth Māori mixed doubles title. The record books will also show

Whanganui produced the winners of the youngest and oldest grades played. John Goldsmith, aged 82, won the



Top: Whanganui cousins Paris Butters (left) and Kiwi No1 Paige Hourigan claimed the women's doubles title at the Aotearoa Māori Tennis Championship this week. Hourigan also won the women's singles title and Butters the mixed doubles with brother Kyle for the fourth time.



Below: Whanganui brothers Kyle and Sam Butters claimed the men's doubles title at the Aotearoa Māori Tennis Championships this week. Kyle also the men's singles title for the seventh time and the mixed doubles for the fourth with sister Paris Butters. PHOTOS / SUPPLIED

over-76 age group national titles in singles and doubles. He won against Dinny Mohi in the singles final 6/5 and with doubles partner Peter Thomas beat Mohi and Richard Collier in a classic encounter, eventually winning 6/5.

Young rising star, 9-year-old Naomi Browne, won the girls 10s title.

Whanganui Tennis Club president David Butters, who is also patriarch of the Butters clan, said the most the family had won previously was three.

"For the first time in Māori tennis history a family dominated and won all five open titles. The most we have won previously was three, so to win all five open titles will go down as a great victory for Whanganui Māori and Whanganui Māori tennis," Butters said.

"The opening powhiri was very powerful and the cultural night and kapa haka was spine-chilling. I believe that we did Whanganui proud. What a great city we have with tennis facilities that are world class.

"This event was huge for us all and will go down in Māori history as the year Whanganui dominated the opens as well as other age groups," Butters said.

Region's riders heading in the right direction

Motorcycling
Andy McGechan

Whanganui boxes well above its weight in terms of motorcycling talent.

The evidence for this is clear when giving the results of the just-completed Suzuki International Series a closer scan.

For a city with a population of just over 40,000, there are an incredible number of top performers, with fans at Whanganui's final round, on the fabled Cemetery Circuit on Boxing Day, fully appreciative of the efforts put in by their comrades in arms on this 70th annual running of the street race event.

Throughout all 13 classes that were competed for in the popular three-round series, the names of Whanganui riders were a telling feature, none more so than in the Super Moto class, a racing category for lightly-modified dirt bikes, where gearing might be changed and knobby tyres swapped for road-race rubber.

"It is great to see so many Whanganui riders supporting the series and also doing very well," said series promoter and organiser Allan 'Flea' Willacy.

"It gives me a warm feeling of pride when I see locals doing so well at this iconic Whanganui event. Each of these riders receives massive support from local companies too and some of these are also valuable sponsors for our series.

"If it wasn't for this kind of local support, we wouldn't have the calibre of event that we now enjoy and support from the Whanganui District Council is also much appreciated. It just wouldn't happen without these people," said Willacy.

"The general public of Whanganui



Whanganui's Jayden Carrick (Suzuki GSX-R1000) on his way to finishing third in the Robert Holden Feature race and eighth overall in the F1 class at Whanganui on Boxing Day. Just behind him is eventual overall winner Damon Rees, of Whakatane.

PHOTO / ANDY MCGECHAN, BIKESPORTNZ.COM

also play their part in making this event such a global phenomenon and the generosity and warmth of their hospitality is appreciated also."

A record number of rider entries were received this year and the racing as tight and thrilling as at any time in recent years.

The 2020 Suzuki International series opened at Taupo's Bruce McLaren Motorsport Park on December 6 before heading to Manfeild Circuit Chris Amon, on the outskirts of Feilding, for round two a week later on December 13.

Large crowds flocked to Whanganui for the traditional series finale, the world-renowned Cemetery Circuit races, held on Boxing Day each year since 1951.

This season's 13th annual Suzuki International Series was robbed of overseas involvement because of the Covid-19 pandemic but showed, even with solely Kiwi talent, that it was a truly world-class competition and organisers anticipate it reaching even greater heights next December.

Whanganui rider performances

Robert Holden Memorial feature race: Jayden Carrick 3rd; Richie Dibben 7th. Other qualifiers Sam Willacy and Dwayne Bishop

Formula One: Richie Dibben, 7th overall in the series and 5th overall at Cemetery Circuit; Jayden Carrick 11th in series

(didn't race at Taupo due to illness) and 8th overall at CC.

Formula Two: Tarbon Walker, 11th in series and 10th overall at CC; Luca Durning 9th for series; Jeff Croot, 10th in series, 12th CC.

Formula Three: Tony Hirini, 31st in series, 22nd at CC.

SS300 class: Caleb Gilmore, 2nd in series, 3rd at CC, and also 2nd in series in GIXXER Cup class; Luca Durning, 6th in series.

Formula Sport/Bears, Senior: Dwayne Bishop, 1st in series, 2nd at CC; Sam Willacy, 2nd in series, 1st at CC and pole winner; Stephen Leggett, 8th in series.

Formula Sport/Bears, Junior: Daren Bendle, 1st in series, 1st at CC; Blane Hannah, 2nd in series, 4th at CC.

Super moto: Jono Hamlin, 2nd in series, 1st at CC and pole winner; Ben Dowman, 4th at CC (only entered CC); James Clarke, 3rd in series, 5th at CC; Roger Bland, 7th in series, 6th at CC; Craig Scott, 5th in series, 7th at CC; James Daniels, 14th in series, 9th at CC; Tony Hirini, 11th in series, 13th at CC; Alex Luff-Scott, 17th in series, 14th at CC; Marc McKenzie, 15th in series, 17th at CC; Wilson Woods, 13th in series (crashed/injured in qualifying at CC)

GIXXER Cup: Caleb Gilmore, 2nd in series, 1st at CC; Lucy Dowman, 5th in series, 5th at CC; Stephen Leggett, 9th in series, 10th at CC; Emma Dowman, 10th in series, 8th at CC.

F1 Sidecars: Adam Unsworth/Bryce Rose (ex Whanganui), 2nd in series, 1st at CC.

F2 Sidecars: Louise Blythe swinging for Ian Burke, 4th in series.

Classic Sidecars, CC only: Robert Hood/Graham Wilkinson 1st; James & Lucy Dowman 2nd; Peter Dowman & Louise Blythe 4th; Corey Winter & Kieran Whitham 10th; Perry Lett & Michael Dowman 12th.

Pre 89 Senior: Jeff Croot, 4th in series, 4th at CC.

Pre 89 Junior: Tony Sklenars, 3rd in series, 2nd at CC; Marc McKenzie, 5th in series; Bill James, 10th at CC.

Henry joins squad before second test

Cricket

Matt Henry has replaced Neil Wagner in the Black Caps squad for the second cricket test against Pakistan.

After bowling 49 overs on two broken toes in New Zealand's 101-run victory in the first test, Wagner has been ruled out of the final match of the series starting in Christchurch tomorrow.

Black Caps coach Gary Stead confirmed on Thursday the tireless left-arm's place in the squad would be taken by Henry.

Stead said the Canterbury seamer brought test experience and local knowledge to the squad.

"Matt has been in good form with the ball having recently taken 6-53 for New Zealand A against the Pakistan Shaheens (A side) in December.

"We're still a couple of days out from the test, so need to take a look at the surface while also assessing our options for best-possible team make-up."

Henry has 30 wickets in 12 tests, the last of which came in the third and final match of the series in Australia this time last year.

Stead said Wagner had wanted to travel with the team to Christchurch but the decision was made for him to head straight into recovery instead.

Wagner had received multiple injections during the first test to dull the pain of the injuries and still managed a high workload, including taking four wickets in the match, but Stead that feat could not be repeated.

"The injections he was getting were wearing off each time and we can't have him going through that again for this test match," he said.



Matt Henry has been called up the Black Caps' test squad.

"Everyone knows that Neil plays with his heart on his sleeve and he just showed how tough he really is and how valuable he has been to New Zealand for a long time.

"We'll miss him enormously but we've got to move on for this test pretty quickly and get things sorted."

Stead said Wagner would need up to six weeks to recover.

New Zealand's other injury concern was with spinner Mitchell Santner who injured a finger on the last day of the first test but Stead expected him to be ready for selection if required.

Stead was considering several combinations for the second test, including bringing in allrounder Daryl Mitchell into the team to play alongside three seam bowlers and a spinner. — RNZ

Adesanya to face light-heavyweight champion

MMA
Christopher Reive

Israel Adesanya could soon hold more UFC gold, with a date set for his bout against light-heavyweight champion Jan Blachowicz.

Speaking to ESPN, UFC president Dana White confirmed the company were booking Adesanya, the reigning middleweight champion, to make the 9kg step up in weight and challenge Poland's Blachowicz at UFC 259 on March 7 (NZ time).

While the fight has been verbally agreed to, contracts are yet to be signed.

The bout will be Blachowicz's first defence of the light-heavyweight title, after claiming the vacant belt against American Dominick Reyes in Abu Dhabi in late September last year. It was the same event in which Adesanya defended his middleweight crown against Brazil's Paulo Costa. Both Adesanya and



Israel Adesanya and Jan Blachowicz will fight for the UFC light-heavyweight title in March.

Blachowicz won their respective fights that night by second-round stoppages. It's a bout that has been in the work for some time. In October, the Herald confirmed Adesanya's camp were set to enter negotiations for the fight as it was the only real challenge out there at the moment, with Adesanya having



decimated the middleweight division. The Nigerian-Kiwi has beaten three of the top five UFC middleweights, and the other two are yet to prove themselves worthy of a title shot following recent losses.

"When you look at the landscape at middleweight, there's nothing,"

Adesanya's coach Eugene Bareman told the Herald in October.

"We need the next challenge and, for us, that's moving up to 205 and fighting Blachowicz. That's the next biggest challenge in front of us and that's the one we want."

The bout against Blachowicz won't be the first time Adesanya has stepped up in weight class during his professional combat sports career.

The 31-year-old has fought at heavyweight in kickboxing, winning the King in the Ring title in the weight class in 2015.

Only seven fighters in UFC history have been champions in multiple divisions; four of those being simultaneous.

Irish superstar Conor McGregor was the first simultaneous two-weight champion, holding both the featherweight and lightweight titles for a short time in 2016. — NZ Herald

Briefly

Breakers escape to Hobart

Basketball: The Breakers basketballers temporarily moved to Tasmania yesterday after a fresh Covid-19 outbreak in Victoria. The New Zealand NBL team had been in Melbourne for almost three weeks preparing for the season to start. But both the Breakers and South East Melbourne Phoenix will move to Hobart and NBL Commissioner Jeremy Loeliger said they would be accommodated and train there under strict Covid protocols. "This will give us time to assess and work through the next steps required as we prepare for the forthcoming NBL Season." The Breakers will open their season against Melbourne United in Melbourne on January 15.

Stags leap up T20 table

Cricket: Central Districts are leading the domestic men's T20 cricket competition. The Stags romped to a

70-run win over Auckland in New Plymouth on Thursday, handing the Aces their third straight loss. Josh Clarkson belted a career-best 78 off just 31 balls, while George Worker hit 79 off 46 as the home side posted 226-8, before bowling Auckland out for 156 in the 19th over. Meanwhile, in the women's competition, Auckland beat Central Districts by eight runs to draw level with front-runners Wellington. An unbeaten 63 from White Fern Lauren Down helped the Hearts to 158-2 batting first, with the Hinds only managing 150-8 from their 20 overs to remain winless after three matches.

Murray pulls out of Florida

Tennis: Andy Murray has pulled out of the Delray Beach Open to minimise his coronavirus risk as he looks toward the Australian Open. The 33-year-old British player said he was concerned about the "increase in Covid rates" and the trans-Atlantic flight in travelling to the Florida tournament that begins on Tuesday. The Five-time Australian Open runner-up was given a wild-card entry into the first Grand Slam tournament.