

2018/19 Open Grade Report

Mid Canterbury Open Grade playing numbers remained pretty constant over the past season. The standard of play is increasing though, which is very pleasing.

Saturdays continue to have **5 A Reserve** and **6 A Grade** teams do battle in the afternoons. Most South Island regions would love to have such a strong and vibrant Saturday competition, and honours were shared around the major clubs in Mid Canterbury.

There is a **Canterbury Country A Grade Mixed** competition which the other 3 sub-unions contest, 5 teams from Ellesmere, 2 from Malvern, and one from North Canterbury. A couple of our ladies travelled up each week to play in this competition (for the winning team!), and it is intended to enter a **Mid Canterbury team** for the coming season. Teams consist of 4 men and 4 ladies, with provision to carry a fifth player to share the load. Matches are played up to 9, in singles, doubles and mixed doubles. Every second week the team would play at Ashburton Trust Tennis Centre, as it is a home-and-away competition.

I believe we can be competitive with the top Browning Shield Country players without detracting from our current competitions in Ashburton. It offers **female players a chance to play against other females** instead of being pitted against male players which is mostly the case in our current competitions.

Several top Mid Canterbury players played in the **Christchurch Premier Grade** on Saturday afternoons, with **James Watt**, **Flynn Ness**, **Tessa McCann** and **Ashleigh Leonard** all performing with distinction.

The Gala Cup, (Mid Canterbury Championships), was hotly contested, with nearly 40 competitors! **Tessa McCann** dominated the Women's Events, winning the Singles and Doubles (partnered by **Larissa Allan**), and also the Mixed Doubles with her father **Neil**. **Cameron McCracken**, who came down from North Canterbury to play regularly on Saturdays, justified his top seeding by making the final. He beat **Sam Bubb** in a tough 3-setter, after Bubb had upset second seed, and 9-time champion **Rhys Cromie** in the semis. Cromie got a measure of comfort from winning the Men's Doubles with **Peter Leonard**, over Bubb and **Tyler Leonard**.

Tessa McCann also made Canterbury sporting headlines, by defending her Canterbury Open title at Wilding Park, and also winning the prestigious Canterbury Tennis "Player of the Year". This was a huge honour, and we are very proud of Tessa! She finished the season inside the top 40 players in New Zealand. **James Watt** is also currently in the top 50 men in NZ.

In the lower **Christchurch Div 1 and 2** Grades, Mid Canterbury had record representation in the Men's grades, with **Rhys Cromie**, **Cameron McCracken**, **Sam Bubb**, **Edwin Dargue**, **Peter Leonard**, **Tyler Leonard**, **Connor Brosnahan**, **Jarrad Hill**, **Jason Feutz** and **Gareth Evans** all representing Canterbury Country on Sundays. Sadly, Country were unable to field a Women's team, with not enough able to commit regularly, although plenty had said they would "fill in"!

Canterbury Tennis are looking at changing those competitions from Sunday to Saturday, which has implications for Country players. Mid Canterbury are strongly objecting, due to the impact it would have if players travelled to Christchurch instead of playing locally.

Seven Mid Canterbury players represented Canterbury Country in the South Island Quadrangular tournament held at Wilding Park in May, taking on Otago, Tasman and Canterbury. These players were **Tessa McCann**, **Ashleigh Leonard**, **Jade Brosnahan**, **Rhys Cromie**, **Flynn Ness**, **Tyler Leonard** and **Connor Brosnahan**.

The Browning Shield was played at Wilding Park in February, and Mid Canterbury made it a six-peat, so the Shield is staying in our cabinet here until at least next February. The team of 18, led by **Tessa McCann** and **Rhys Cromie** proved far too good for North Canterbury and Malvern. Ellesmere put up a stern fight in the final tie, but **Neil** and **Tessa McCann's** big Mixed Doubles win over the top Ellesmere pair sealed the deal for another season. Neil's injury troubles have largely kept him off court, but we thank him for his timely intervention that day, and for the regular training he puts in with Tessa to keep her in good form.

Our flagship **Thursday night Sunset Doubles** competition is still flourishing, with the maximum number of 128 players most weeks. Murray Amyes, Phil Crozier and their team are doing great work, and plans in the pipeline to upgrade the floodlights should further enhance the experience for our evening players.

Twilight tennis is also going well on Wednesday nights, with three-handed teams, and the handicap system for matches. Thanks yet again to **Peter Yates** for his management of this competition. I'm sure there may be a few spaces for some players or teams in the coming season, in this slightly more social of grades.

Masters Mixed is still going well on the grass courts at Allenton, but, as we say every year, each season presents further challenges for grass courts, and we are very lucky to have a grass court competition at all! It is for Over-35's, and each week players have 3 games of doubles against players of similar level.

Many thanks to our Administrator, **Katherine McDonnell**, who does great work at the Centre each weekday morning until her hockey duties call.

Last but not least, our Coach, Andre van Rooyen, who has given us his time and wisdom for the past three seasons, is undergoing treatment for cancer. His smiling face at the Centre is sadly missed, as is his playing and coaching ability. He helped us old broken fellas win the New Zealand 50+ Teams event, and starred in the final win over Auckland in May, shortly before he was hospitalised. Nice way to sign the season off, Andre, and the treatment he has been having to pay for, seems to be making a positive difference to his condition, and we hope we can get him back along for some more tennis shortly, as that is one of his passions. I'm sure we all pass on our best wishes to Andre, Debbie, Sebastian and Christine (and Rocky the dancing dog!).

Andre has also given great encouragement and support to his successor, Jack Tiller, whom he has worked with a little in the past, and it has made the transition from Christchurch much easier for Jack.

Onwards and upwards for the 2019/2020 season!

Many thanks – **Tony Brosnahan** (Open Grade Convenor)