



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PÉTANQUE LEAGUE

SA State Singles Championships

held at: *Club de Pétanque d'Adelaide*

5 May, 2019

Open Singles Champion: **Maurice Belz**

Runner Up: Raja Jamaledine

Semi-Finalists: Phil Pollard
 Anthony Pietsch

Champion Veteran: **Phil Pollard**

Ladies Singles Champion: **Judith Brown**

Runner Up: Janet Jenkin

Third Place: Glenis Head

Consolante Winner: Alexi Alexi

Consolante Runner Up: Martin Verdonk

Conviviale Winner: Tina Stockley

Conviviale Runner Up: Craig Stewart

(Report follows...)

A near-record turnout of players for this year's SA Singles Championships were rewarded with some fine and very pleasant autumn weather, a great atmosphere and some excellent competition.

The Open attracted a strong field of 24 entrants and the evenness of the competition was reflected in the results. Across the preliminary rounds, all but four players chalked up at least two wins out of their five games while only three individuals won more than three. Nevertheless, two remained undefeated and, to prove that it was more than just 'luck of the draw', these two remained that way throughout the knockout rounds and into the Final.

On one side was local hero Raja Jamaledine, gunning for his third title in this event. His opponent was Maurice Belz. These two men both have experience representing their country at the international level -- but not for the same country. This was Maurice's first appearance in a SAPL championship since relocating here from NZ last year and he showed why he has already had such a large impact on the local pétanque scene.

The Final was a worthy contest and a demonstration of pétanque played at the very highest level by two elite players. Raja made the early running, establishing a small lead but not able to break away. The competition was fierce and every ball had the potential to turn things around. Eventually, Maurice made his move at just the right time and clinched the title with a 13-10 victory. Bravo Maurice.

An honourable mention must also go to Phil Pollard (who, incidentally, came in at the last moment having kindly offered to play or not as required to get an even number and thus avoid byes). In the first game of the day, Phil was on the receiving end of a pétanqueing 'lesson' from Raja. He was obviously a good student though, because thereafter he kept winning against all and sundry. His unbroken streak extended right through to the semi-final, in which he gave Maurice an almighty scare before finally succumbing 10-13. This is the second time Phil has reached the semis in State Singles and earnt the title of Champion Veteran, echoing his exploits of 2014.

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The women's competition also attracted a pleasing number of entrants, despite the absence of several of the usual suspects. Half of the field were competing in the Singles for the first time, but they were all good players, so it was bound to be somewhat unpredictable. Yet even Nostradamus or the Oracle of Delphi would have struggled with this one.

Like the Open, the Ladies' results reflect a very even competition, with all winning at least one game but only one player winning all five of the preliminary rounds. Similarly, it was the stand-out player from the morning session who continued to dominate throughout the afternoon.

The runner-up was Janet Jenkin, a player whose game has steadily improved and is now a force to be reckoned with. Hers was a meritorious result for someone competing in this event for the first time, coming on the back of two strong wins in the after-lunch session. However, when it came to the final, it was someone with considerably more experience who prevailed.

The new Ladies Champion and undoubted star of the day was Judith Brown. Already a legend in her own time, she now (in the Australian tradition) must surely be elevated to the status of 'absolute legend'. Her performance in winning eight out of eight games, on her own, in the most demanding form of the game, was nothing short of remarkable.

Turning 89 this year, Judith will go into the record books as the oldest player to win any SAPL state championship, by some considerable margin. Having taken up the game as an opportunity to practice speaking French more than thirty years ago, Judith has previously achieved distinction in Doubles (Ladies Champion, 2011 & 2013) and Mixed Doubles (Champion Veteran, 2016). She was also the Veteran Ladies Champion in the inaugural State Singles in 2006! Nevertheless, this latest triumph probably outshines them all -- proving that some reds just keep getting better with age.