

2020/21 SA State Triples Championship

Last season's winner was COVID-19 but, fortunately, the 2020/21 State Triples Championship was able to go ahead as planned – 14 months after the 2018/19 event. It was very well supported, with 69 players in attendance. In just a couple of years, the number of entrants for this competition has nearly doubled, with many participating this year for the first time. The conditions were cool but mostly fine and the competitive spirit was excellent.

The random draw added some spice to the morning session as a number of the early favourites were drawn to play each other in the preliminaries, in the 'pool of death'. Only the strongest survived while others did not make the cut. Hence, it was not just the usual suspects making up the final eight. Some of the newcomers also took their opportunity to shine. However, as is so often the case, experience won out in the end.

The new champions are Deb Rodda, Selina Dally & Wendy Bensen. Their exploits are already legendary – they hold numerous records and all three have performed with distinction representing Australia on the world stage. This latest win is also historic as they are the first all-female team to win a South Australian Open championship in any format. Selina becomes the first female player with two Open Triples titles to her name. Deb and Wendy add an Open crown to accompany the Women's Triples trophies they won in the last two years that a separate women's event was run (before being discontinued in 2008).

The runners-up were Jean-Luc Gonnet, Bruce Lucas & Jonathan Giddings. These three are rapidly establishing themselves as a new heavyweight combination on the local pétanque scene. Having already seen off the defending champions in the quarter-final, they earned their place in the decider by virtue of a commendable return bout against the formidable trio of Alexi, Dave Lefer & Maurice Belz in the semis. (It's uncanny how often you get two different winners when the same teams play each other twice within a tournament.)

The Consolante winners were another experienced all-female team, Rada Pierre, Jenny Key & Tina Stockley, so it was definitely a day for the girls. It looks like SA will have some strong contenders in the women's competitions when the Easter Nationals finally come to Adelaide.

To conclude, one more team that also needs a mention was from the Adelaide Hills club, comprising Neil Maslin, Robin Austin & Rob Mawson. In their first state championship, these three had the misfortune to face a preliminary draw against three daunting teams that, between them, did not contain a single player without international experience as Australian representatives! Lesser men might have been a bit demoralised by lunchtime, but these guys took the attitude that "if it doesn't kill you it just makes you stronger". They performed creditably in all three of those games and then went on to win the Conviviale in the afternoon, fighting all the way to the end. One would have to say that their bottle of wine was well-earned.

Congratulations to all the winners. Thanks to those who made the day possible, especially the volunteers from host club ESP and the umpire, Terry Hall.