

Chairman's Report Ballarat Highlands Bowls Region 2022-23

Another season has passed for us all and despite the poor start weather wise across the Region we were able to have a viable and successful Pennant Season. Once again can I reiterate the Board's thanks for the spirit of co-operation from all clubs in the early part of the season which enabled us to minimise disruption to games as best we could.

There were a few changes to the season including the expanding of Ballarat's highest division to 16 players a side, whilst this move didn't receive universal approval by all clubs it allowed us all to see what the change meant to all clubs. Going forward we need to experience one more year of the format to test its viability. The cosmetic change to discard the title of Premier Division in favour of Division One had little consequence to how bowls was conducted in Ballarat.

There will be no change to the format of 16 players per team in Divisions One to Seven in Ballarat. Division Eight and Nine will be determined after team nominations are confirmed.

Our State Events were conducted as a Region after one year of holding separate events and whilst the weather did not assist us in the earlier held events, we have assessed the situation as a Board and determined that State Events will be held alternatively in each of the playing areas. Highlands will host Singles and Triples with Ballarat conducting Pairs, Fours and Mixed Pairs. In 2024-25 the opposite will come into play. Both the Over 60 events and Novices are now incorporated into Carnivals conducted by BV.

Our Board State Events Directors will oversee the running of all State Events with each Playing area Match Committee to supervise the event.

Congratulations to all Premiers across our Region on both Saturday and Mid-Week Pennant Competitions, your members hard work and dedication has rewarded your club's leaders and selectors in particular. My thanks to all the volunteers across the Region for their hard work and dedication to their clubs.

Board wise we have had tremendous efforts by our diligent secretary Wayne Morgan and all our Board members who have taken up roles of liaising with our various committees that run our competition. Financially we are travelling well as a Region and I thank Finance Director Glenn Hampton for his solid work.

Our representative teams continue to shine across our competitions against Bendigo (Women-win /loss) Geelong (Men-loss) and the Provincial Shield (Wimmera, Geelong and Bendigo- two wins) We looked forward to travelling to Moama/Echuca for the Region Sides competition in late May and whilst the Women played well with a top three finish in the Silver division there is still a bit of work for the men in a competition that highlights the need to have our top bowlers making themselves available. Our notable win over Geelong reinforced the knowledge that we can be competitive in this event. Next year of course this competition moves to mid -January affecting our capacity to play Pennant on that weekend as we would usually do.

The change of the Vic Open from November to mid-March whilst opening up the November date for Pennant further impacts our season which could mean playing double-headers at various times of the year. The playing of 18 weeks Pennant in Ballarat is becoming increasingly difficult to manage for administrators and the question is being asked are we too Pennant Centric? the progression of bowls in the area and the opportunity to recruit new players to clubs is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain? In the last five years Ballarat membership has declined from 2003 in 2018 to

1757 in 2022 a loss of 246 or 12.0% are we to explain this by members passing, Covid, opportunities to play Metro Pennant?

The question needs to be asked why is the Ballarat playing area the only area to play 18 weeks of Pennant in the State? Whilst the argument will be why should we be like everyone else? the simple truth is players particularly playing in Division Two downwards don't enjoy battling to stop relegation every week they go out to play Pennant. I'll explain more in a separate article.

Congratulations to all our Region State Event Champions who travelled to Bendigo to compete against all the other Region Winners. Brenton Coad won the Champion of Champions, whilst Joel Clark (City Oval) was runner-up in the Novice Men's Singles and the City Oval team of S.Grano, S.McCracken, E.Kierce and J.Roberts were runners-up in the Women's Fours .Well done to all.

The exceptional work carried out by Yvonne Clark and Leslie Hodgson in training up over 40 officials for the Region was most welcome with training courses held in Ballarat and Highlands the Region has received bang for their buck in getting value for the Training Grant received from the Government.

Congratulations to Buninyong and Learmonth who celebrated 150 years of existence and City Oval on their 100 years of operation, truly memorable efforts by the club and its members. It was my honour to be at their celebrations and to remember the efforts of their forebearers in establishing the clubs.

In closing, can I thank all those who have put their hand up to work on the Board, many thanks to Wayne Lynch who worked diligently with the Representative sides Committee and for all those people who contributed by being members on the various committees we have established to run the game of bowls.

I would also like to acknowledge the Skipton Club for joining our Region, I hope that you will be welcomed by all clubs during the seasons to come.

Many thanks for your support of myself over the last two years as your Chairman for this Region. I realise that by observation many people may think that I dominate the Region Board, but let me assure you all that the Board as your representatives work towards what is best for bowls, when we enter the boardroom for our monthly meetings our club hats are left at the door. Everyone who is on the Board must agree to all things relating to bowls in our Region and everyone has a valued opinion and is listened to. Those people who would make you think that certain clubs run bowls in the Region could not be further from the truth. If anybody has a concern then they are invited to address the Board at any time. Scurrilous rumours and innuendo are not welcome and are damaging to the hard workers who serve bowls in your Region.

The Board at the September Delegates Meeting will release its vision for bowls across the Region for the next five years, if your club does not have five -year plan and a vision then you should be asking why not?

Yours in Bowls

Ian Guymer