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OCEANIA

Oceania: Opening

Players entered the ceremonial grounds behind their country's Placards carried by St Andrew College students who lead them between two rows of Rangi Ruru College students performing a rousing Kapa haka. Both schools then sang a Waiata. Very moving.

Each participating country's flags were raised. Miles Cowper Read the Oath of Fair Play on behalf of all Players and Trevor Neilson did the same for all Officials and Umpires.



The Tournament was declared Open.....so let the games begin!

Oceania: Competitions....Pointing and Shooting

Pointing and shooting for the men, Singles for the women kick-started proceedings. New on the scene were shooting and pointing templates designed/made by Richard Browne.



The plane-shape is for shooting and the other for pointing.

NZ umpires were in charge of this phase and what a massive effort they put into the 2 ½ day event. Sixty women and men shot/pointed until the top 8 of each were sorted, then played off until champions were found. It was a huge commitment by these volunteers, bending, moving boards, smoothing divots and judging results. A huge thanks to you all. A Tahitian male shot his way into the bronze playoff, then put in his best performance by hitting the cochonnet into the Boon docks 4 times, adding 20 points to his total, making a Grand Total of 63/100. The world record is 67 so it was a tremendous effort.

Special mention of a grand performance by Claire Wilson for winning the Pointing Gold for Women.

OCEANIA: ENDING

After 4 days of Petanque, 8am - 8pm, never mind the early morning practice sessions, it was time for the closing medal ceremony, speeches and lowering of the flags. Anne Hogg gave a delightful delivery of the Players Farewell ChCh Petanque Club members fronted up as flag and medal bearers, and medal presenters with other officials, which was a nice decision. ChCh stalwart Pat O'Shea, with a silver tray of medals, led the winners out, passing a camera-toting crowd to stand under the flags. Appropriate Anthems were played (we are all became conversant with La Marseillaise!) Wonderful Tahitian drum rolls accompanied shouts of enthusiasm and joy intermingled with the odd damp eye as the champions were awarded their well earned medals.



THE END TO OUR OWN MINI PETANQUE OLYMPICS

Oceania: Nations

Wallis and **F**utuna are a small group of islands up Fiji, Tonga, Samoa way, with a population of about 12,000. For some members of this team, it was their first ever flight let alone their first time in NZ. Quick trips were made to purchase warmer clothing...which of course they would never use back home! They were a lovely crowd, always smiling and easy to be with. They are French using the French flag and anthem.

New **C**aledonia is an island group in SW Pacific 1200k east of Australia, with its own flag and anthem. Petanque is their national pastime with travel brochures advertising 'join in with the locals at Petanque pistes all along the beach front'. They play with deft hands and lots of enjoyment.

Tahiti is the largest island in French Polynesia in the central southern Pacific Ocean with a pop of 285,000. They were to have held the 2014 World Championships but the gov't cancelled it because of the Ebola scare at the time. Petanque is their game. They perform at the highest levels World wide and achieve at the highest levels. Their Govt pays for their uniforms, all travel, including \$2000 to each player to help cover personal expenses. A win against a Tahitian team is one to be savoured.

Australia is chocker full of French speaking players and officials from many different nations. Their teams are put together from all over the country which often makes difficulties for team bonding. They are a young team of players full of enthusiasm.

Vanuatu unfortunately couldn't make it to the Oceania due to the natural disaster that wrecked havoc in their country weeks beforehand. They were the Overall Champions of the previous Oceania which means there is no need to say any more about their amazing pétanque capabilities.

New **Z**ealand players can only benefit from rubbing pétanque shoulders with such elite players. The men had difficulties bettering their counterparts, tho there were four 5th places and a good singles placing. The women matched their opponents better with a haul of 1 gold, 1 silver, 2 bronze, two 4ths, two 5th places, gained from overall results in pointing, shooting and team games.

OceanIa: Incidents

In a brand new venue like this, and a first tournament of this size, all will not go to plan, and it didn't.

First night the burglar alarm went off. Gremlins, not burglars. Caused a bit of hilarity when I rang the alarm monitoring company who wanted to know the name of the building. I had no idea, so told her it was beside the new Pétanque courts. Her reply. "What's Petanque?". Then "What's the address.?" Told her "In Hagley Park". "Where's that?".. and so on. Turns out she was in Auckland. My turn to say "where's that!"

Then, another morning awoke to find water flowing freely from the adjoining tennis courts flooding the back pistes. An irrigation computer problem, apparently, and fortunately, quickly sorted.

Then the toilets blocked. This caused a few anxious moments, until it was discovered the club rooms, unbelievably, have a septic tank system. A quick call to the local septic tank cleaner and all was well, but had to call him back two days later. Does that mean everyone was getting too well fed?!

We won't mention the courtesy coach driver who 'lost' half the Tahitian team.

And then there was the overseas player who wanted to go to a massage parlour. Am curious why he thought I would know where that was!

What about the catering order of 4 boxes of muffins which, on arrival came as 1 box with four muffins inside! The rest arrived later causing no problems.

Overall the whole tournament was remarkably, off piste, nearly incident free, which is testament to the organising skills of Diane Findlay and her very capable team.

Reporter: Colin Bunce

Oceania: Analysis

This is a hard one.

As a Petanque player, it was just the best.

Did it promote Petanque? Probably not.

A few curious spectators stayed for a moment or two wondering what was going on. I spoke to some of them who were totally oblivious about Petanque.

Did PNZ make the best of this opportunity? Probably not, but this is not a criticism of PNZ. I know they tried, but somebody out there must have the skills which most of us don't have, to volunteer to do this essential task. Enough said, as its all been said countless times before.

The most obvious difference between NZ and the rest of the countries involved, was age. Especially the men. The other teams were years younger than NZ. And this showed in play. I am not implying we played badly as that is not true. But there is no substitute for youth.

Overall, it was a magnificent spectacle, and I loved every minute of it. Personally, I was blown away by the ball skills of these young people.

Two board members need a special mention. President Stef, and board member Eric, and their spouses, were present every day, from early morning until late. Putting all this responsibility on too few shoulders was not on.

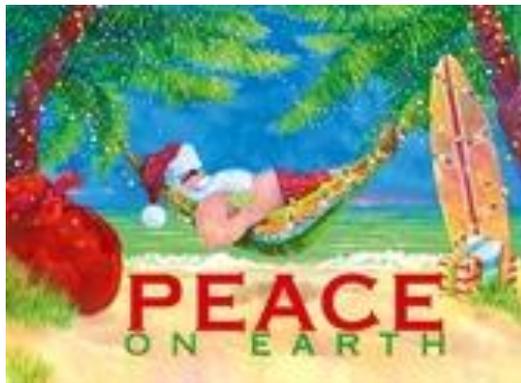
Where the hell was every one else. I was personally ashamed at the lack of prominent Petanque players who were not present to assist..... Ahh, I've got that off my chest.

I absolutely loved team Tahiti's drum rolls during the medal ceremony. Also the 'off the cuff' entertainment on Saturday night. Good on you, mates!

As a van driver, it was a delight to drive the off-shore players. Do Tahitians, Wallis et Fortuna and New Caledonians ever stop laughing? A great bunch of guys and gals. You are all a credit to your countries.

Reporter: Colin Bunce

*Seasons Greetings
to you all*



From the Emag team