



Paul Skinley

Paul Joseph Skinley often said he learnt croquet while in his pram accompanying his mother when she was playing at the Rangatira Croquet Club in Dannevirke. The club was a great source of inspiration for a young boy as two stalwarts Eileen Stephens and Gladys Browne were leading lights in the club and one of their sons and the club sported two MacRobertson Shield players, Tony Stephens and Ralph Browne from whom to learn the game.

Because of his tender years – Paul started to play seriously at the age of 11 – he developed his own style using the Solomon grip. He played with an extra-long mallet and an upright stance with locked knees. When the mallet was at full flex on the back swing through his legs, the mallet formed a perfect 90-degree angle with his body. The mallet then came forward with a powerful swing which, when making a roquet, ended with the mallet head above his own head. The fact that his feet were so close together in that stance caused the odd mishaps, to his cost. The gap was not much wider than the mallet head.

He first won the North Island Open Singles in 1974 and the next season was runner up to Bob Jackson in the N.Z. Open. In 1980 and 1981 the roles were reversed and Paul was the winner. He won his third N.Z. Open title in 1985 with an immaculate display of precision croquet on lightning fast courts, defeating Joe Hogan in the final.

Paul returned to prominence in the 2006 New Zealand Open, coming second to Robert Fulford. A very unlucky ankle injury prevented him from taking part in the 2006 MacRobertson Shield test series but, he was again selected to play in 2010. He was a reserve for the 2014 series in New Zealand.

Paul moved to Wellington in 1978 and joined the Wellington Municipal Croquet Club and was a leading light in the club for five decades. Not only a player of international and national representation, Paul had a significant number of New Zealand titles in the Open championships and the Island championships as well as Silver Badge Competitions, Invitation events and his own club and Association events to his name. Over those 40 years Paul collected almost all the trophies available to him.

Paul named the Wellington Croquet Club "The Best Little Croquet Club in the World" and was the caretaker, lawn setter and tournament manager for the club as well as carrying out many other unsung tasks. He was made a Life Member of his club in 2005, the Wellington Croquet Association in 2015 and Croquet New Zealand in 2019.

Paul made major contributions on the national front being the New Zealand handicapper from 1988 to 1994 and was also a

Achievements:

- NZ Open Champion
(1985, 1981, 1980)
- NZ Open Doubles
(1997, 1995)
- MacRobertson Shield Team
(2010, 1996, 1993, 1990,
1986, 1982, **1979**)
- Trans-Tasman Team
(2011, **2009**, 1992)
- Men's AC Champion
(2011, 1996, 1983, 1980,
1978)
- AC Mixed Doubles
(2016, 2015, 1997, 1985,
1982)
- Open Handicap Arthur Ross
(1981, 1980, 1979)

- *Silver Tray Invitation*
(1997, 1996, 1994, 1991, 1989,
1985, 1983, 1982, 1981, 1979)
- *North Island AC Champion*
(2017, 2011, 2010, 1981,
1975)
- *North Island AC Doubles*
(2017, 2011, 2010, 2009,
1984)
- *South Island AC Champion*
(1977, 1976)
- *South Island AC Doubles*
(2016, 1978, 1976)
- *CNZ Contribution to Croquet*
(2019)
Representative Matches:
- *vs Wales* (1996)
- *vs England* (1986)

selector. He helped out with administration at various times in the national office and was its Sales Manager from 1995 to 1999.

Sadly, Paul passed away in 2021. He was a croquet player who gave throughout his playing career formally in his roles at club, regional and national levels. If you asked Paul for help, you knew he would always be there to help you do your best.