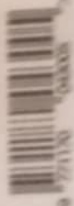


Sport

The Gisborne Herald



Semifinal comeback left door open for Hogan to march on

CROQUET
John Gillies

Gisborne's Joe Hogan has won back-to-back New Zealand men's croquet titles. He beat Croquet New Zealand chief executive Stefan Horner, of Masterton, 26-0, 15-26, 26-2 in the final of the association croquet national men's championship in Dannevirke on Sunday.

It was Hogan's sixth men's title. Barry Memorial Croquet Club member Hogan, 66, now turns his attention to the President's Top 8 invitational event in Wellington next month. The country's top association croquet players will gather to compete from March 12 to 16.

On Saturday, Hogan "came back from the dead" in his semifinal against John Versey, of Napier's Marewa Croquet Club, to win 26-24 after being 14-10 down.

Versey went on to win the third/fourth playoff with the other beaten semifinalist, Dennis Bulloch, of Palmerston North.

Bulloch had been the only player to beat Hogan in block play, and advanced to the semifinal as block runner-up. Horner beat him 26-24.

Bulloch was the beaten finalist last year when Hogan won his fifth New Zealand men's title, 33 years after winning his fourth.

Two blocks of six players contested the preliminary rounds. The winner of one block played the runner-up of the other in the semifinals.

Hogan, the 1989 world singles champion, said the best-of-three final against Horner was played in "extremely challenging" conditions.

"Points were not secured straight away," he said.

The players engaged in "a lot of manoeuvring around the court". The courts were "very fast" with an uneven surface around the hoops, and it was hot.

Hogan and Horner started their match at 8.30am, had half an hour for lunch and finished playing about 11am.

Winner of the national women's title was former women's world champion Miranda Chapman, of James Valley. She beat Bonnie Ingham, of South Taranaki, 22-26,



Backyard croquet: Gisborne's Joe Hogan relaxing at home after his national title-winning performance at the association croquet men's championship in Dannevirke. The trophy (pictured) dates back to 1939 and was originally presented to the New Zealand Croquet Council by the Taranaki Croquet Association. Hogan's mallet, known as the Hogan Mallet, has plenty of history as well - its wooden head dating back to 1972.

Nothing came easy in Hogan's half-dozen

Hogan, the 1989 world singles champion, said the best-of-three final was played in "extremely challenging" conditions.

26-20, 26-22. It was Chapman's third national women's title in a row.

Three weeks earlier, Hogan reached the quarter-finals of the New Zealand open championships held at Mount Maunganui and Kaitiaki. He was beaten by Auckland's Aaron Westery.

Canterbury player Jenny Clarke beat former world champion Paddy Chapman (husband of Miranda) in the final to become the first woman to win the national open singles title in

59 years. The last woman to win it was Jean Jarden in 1966.

Barry Memorial club player Paul Stuart, returning to competitive play after a six-year break, also competed in the national open singles, across four days "against tough opposition". He and Hogan combined for the doubles but didn't reach the knockout stages.

From January 6 to 11, Hogan and Barry clubmate Rob Hayes won three out of five games in the New Zealand

Golf Croquet Open Championships in Nelson but did not qualify for the knockout rounds.

However, they were one of only two combinations to take a game of the eventual winners, Canterbury brothers Logan and Reesie McCorkin-Sale. The beaten finalists were the other team to take a game off them.

In the open singles, Hayes recorded some good wins against high-quality opponents.

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