

Champ chasing hoop dream

Veteran Hogan eyes centenary tournament

CROQUET
John Gillies

Joe Hogan's campaign to be in the conversation on top New Zealand croquet players is up and running.

Gisborne man Hogan, 67, already has status as the inaugural world croquet singles champion, a distinction he achieved in 1989 at the Hurlingham club in England.

Now he is aiming to be in the running for the New Zealand team next year for the MacRobertson Shield series marking the 100th anniversary of the first time the shield was contested (1926).

"It's the Ashes of croquet," Hogan said.

The MacRobertson Shield - croquet's premier team event - is contested every three or four years by Australia, England, New Zealand and the United States. The venue rotates within the four competing nations.

Hogan has been a member of six New Zealand teams to the MacRobertson Shield tournament and is hoping to be at the 100th anniversary tournament in England in July/August next year, if not as a player then as a supporter of New Zealand's effort.

"I'd like to be there to support the campaign to beat the English on their own soil," he said.

Hogan was in the New Zealand team who won the shield in England in 1986 - the only time a team other than the hosts had won the MacRobertson Shield when it was contested in Britain.

England are the holders of the shield, having won the last tournament, held in Australia in 2022. New Zealand last won it in 2013/14 as tournament hosts.

In his bid to be in the conversation for national team spots, Hogan is building up to the association croquet national championships in Wellington early in the new year, and the golf croquet national champs in Hawke's Bay in mid-January.

At the weekend, he took third place in the Morrinsville AC Open - a Quadway Grand Prix association croquet event at which 16 of the best players in the country competed.

They were split into four seeded groups of four, and a round-robin determined the top two in each group to go into the championship rounds; the bottom two went into the plate competition.

Hogan, second in his group, beat Jarrod Coutts of South Canterbury 26-0 in the championship quarter-final but lost his semifinal to eventual tournament winner Paddy Chapman 26-17.

Hogan then played the other losing semifinalist, Aaron Westerbly of Wai-kato, for third place and beat him 26-15.

The semifinal between Hogan and Chapman threw up an interesting coincidence. In conversation during and after the match, the players realised their world titles - Chapman is also a former world singles champion - occurred 29 years apart, and Hogan is 29 years older than Chapman ... they both became world champions at the age of 31.

Chapman won his title in 2018, in Wellington.

"An unusual thing about croquet is the players' desire to help each other," Hogan said.

Chapman had made some encouraging and helpful comments after their game.

Barry Memorial Croquet Club member Hogan is enjoying his time on the court in a playing career he resumed in 2015 after taking time off for family commitments.

So, while Hogan has won the association croquet New Zealand men's title this year and last, he is happy to take on board the encouragement of elite players and, in turn, pass on to young players the benefit of his croquet experience spanning 53 years.

At Labour Weekend, Hogan took part in an association croquet teams event at Mount Maunganui. The top 32 available players in New Zealand were put into four eight-member teams who played doubles against each other. Hogan's team finished third out of four.

His next tournament of note is a golf croquet regional event in Mount Maunganui early next month. He will defend the singles title he won last year and in the doubles will partner clubmate Rob Hayes.



Joe Hogan, of Gisborne's Barry Memorial Croquet Club, is building towards the association croquet national championships in Wellington early in January. He has his sights set on the 100th anniversary MacRobertson Shield tournament in England, if not as a player then perhaps as a spectator.

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