

## **Australia New Zealand Backgammon Federation – AGM**

### **President's report**

Firstly, I would like to thank all members of the outgoing committee for their help in achieving solid progress during the year.

In addition to the Committee, special thanks as always goes to Simon Woodhead. Most members will not be aware of the behind the scenes technical support with the website, emails and the national ratings that Simon provides, but I'm certain that we would be lost without his efforts.

From a Committee point-of-view, the marquee event for the year took place with effect from 1 July this year (so technically outside this reporting period) with the commencement of the Australia New Zealand Backgammon Federation Incorporated and a new website – [www.anzbgf.org](http://www.anzbgf.org). It is worth reporting here as the work in the leadup to this was a special general meeting where the question of the name change was carried. ANZBGF has requested the World Backgammon Federation (WBGF) to recognise our ongoing membership of WBGF covering both countries. WBGF have said that they will look favourably on this request, but to date have not formally responded.

Speaking of the website, Melinda Kelf has done an outstanding job with the new website, and her efforts to integrate with the WBIF is turning heads worldwide.

With the commencement of ANZBGF we also took to opportunity to revise the membership structure and we are now offering longer term memberships (thanks to Rosalind Baker for that suggestion). Quite a few availed themselves of this opportunity, which will increase our revenues in the short-term, with the possible downside of reducing income in future years. We even have our first 10-year members – Grant Hoffman and Rosalind Baker.

Thanks to Melinda Kelf and Cindy Belonogoff we are now offering free monthly online tournament – these have a small but growing reach and are a fun, stress-free way to improve skills and meet new players.

The Eva Bitel tournament was run again in 2021, with Canberra's Craig Elfenbein taking home the trophy. A separate event for newcomers attracted a small but enthusiastic field. Gary Stavrou continues to refine his online tournament offerings and these are well subscribed. The Australian Championships for 2021 were run on the Gold Coast earlier this year – I could not attend but those that did report a well organised event that will surely only be bigger later this year – mark it in your diaries. Other notable events were Australia's entry in the WBIF World Team Championship, where we performed credibly well (thanks to Mel again for coordinating that). Of course there are the many regular club events, with live play making a cautious comeback after two difficult years. The New Zealand scene continues to flourish and I'm happy to reflect that a few Aussies travelled across the ditch to compete in the NZ Championships, with Simon Woodhead taking home the silverware.

I continue to be impressed with how the national ratings system galvanises us to play at our best – the top 6 or 7 are now well established, with David Reitzin threatening to knock Saeed off number 1 spot. Greg Kurrell and Vince Turner have surged up the rankings and Joanna Kerinya is currently our top-ranked female player following her success at the Newcastle Open.

One issue that the Committee has been quite conscious of over the last year is the possibility of cheating in online events. Whilst there is not any direct evidence of cheating, there is a perception that it is happening, and these perceptions are very damaging. The Committee has put processes in place for dealing with any allegation, and players are aware that they are under scrutiny. Hopefully this will act as a deterrent, and thankfully there have not been any complaints since those procedures were implemented (possibly due to the low incidence of such behaviour but also the inherently ethical behaviour of our members). However, we do need to remain vigilant.

All in all, I'm happy to report that there is a vibrant and growing local scene with an increasing international presence. I wish the incoming committee great success in their endeavours.

Happy Rolling

Dr Greg Ash  
President

18 September 2022