

newsletter

Australia New Zealand Backgammon Federation

April 2024

melbourne ready to roll again

After the huge success of the inaugural ANZBGF Championship last June, organisers are expecting an even bigger turnout for this year's renewal on the King's Birthday long weekend.

Set to make this year's event even bigger and better, the ANZBGF organising committee has responded to demand and included a Masters tournament. That means the event, held at the Amora Riverside Hotel in Richmond from June 7-9, will feature a 128-strong ANZBGF Championship, the likely 16-person Masters and the popular Intermediate tournament.

Malcolm Hutson will be back to defend his Championship title, while Elsa McNally – eligible until she wins the event twice – will likely defend her Intermediate title. The \$300-entry Masters is expected to attract many of the nation's serious players in a competition where the pressure is likely to be as high as the PR is low.

Following a great turnout last year, the ANZBGF will once again hold a welcome dinner on the Friday night, with the main flight getting under way Saturday morning. The BMAB tournament, in which players get to test their skill as well as their luck, will be held at Latvian House in Elwood on Friday.



everyone's chasing ben



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The remarkable form of NSW's Ben Phillips in the Australian Open has made him a big leader in the ANZBGF Live Points Championship – although Grant Hoffman is fast making ground after his NZ Open win.

Mick Dyett is sitting third (although more than 40 points behind), with South Australian backgammon legend Nick Begakis the big mover after winning his second SA Open.

With two major championship and plenty of state and local live play to go before the end of the year, though, the race for best live player honours is far from over.

our place in the world

As the Australian and New Zealand backgammon community gets bigger, the world is getting smaller for the oldest game as more and more players head overseas to play.

While the likes of Mike Dyett, Zvi Bendavid, Simon Woodhead, Tino Lechich, Steve Roberts, Cindy Belognoff – and the list goes on - have played with varying success in events like the World Championships, Cyprus Open and Japan Open, the standard of our play was never on greater display than at Macau in February.

Having won last year's inaugural ANZBGF Championship, Malcolm Hutson recently took home the rich Jackpot prize at Macao against elite competition. For Malcolm, who has travelled the world playing the game, it pays for more than a few more trip and events with money left over.

Of course, Mick has had plenty of success overseas and last year, perennial topline Hossein Haydari won several events on a whirlwind trip to Turkey. Adam Makda and Daniel Pedrecal are trying their luck in May as they warm up for the second ANZBGF title.

NZ doing us all proud

Fast becoming one of the world's great promoters of backgammon, the New Zealand Open lived up to its reputation when the nation's leading player Grant Hoffman had his work cut out beating 15-year-old protégé Joash Sajan in the final. Grant and Joash had a tense and entertaining final, in which Joash led early before the "veteran" came back to level at 9-9. A cube and a gammon sealed the win for Grant, who took the title 13-9. Joseph Heled finished third.

Runner-up Joash once again took out the Student Champion prize, while Ivo Zarnick won the Silver Plate. Joash is a product of a groundbreaking backgammon program run at Auckland's St Peter's College by George Dumitrache. The program is helping make NZ a world-leader in the teaching and promotion of our great game.

The NZ Open was a huge success, with 56 players attending the Auckland Bridge Club venue on March 23.



the voice of Australian backgammon

There's not much Mick Dyett hasn't achieved in backgammon but the dual Australian Open winner said it was "a career highlight" when he was asked to commentate this year's Macau Open alongside world-renowned Michihito Kageyama. Mick was invited to join Michi in providing expert commentary on the Macau Doubles final when leading US player David Wells became unavailable, and he was so well-regarded that he stayed on to start analysing the Open final as well.



"It was such an honour" Mick says. "Michi of course is one of the Giants and it was very flattering for him to want me alongside him to commentate of the matches."

Anyone who's ever played Mick in a serious match knows that the respect is well placed. He has the analytical skills to assess any move and doubling cube action, particularly how it relates to match position.

If he can analyse the moves of elite players, it tells us all that we'd better be on our game – with a few good rolls – when we play him.

sister act

Never mind the Three Sisters that draw thousands of tourists to the Blue Mountains every year, Sydney now has its own “three sisters” of backgammon! The Farzaneh sisters were born in Shiraz, an Iranian city renowned for poetry, literature, history and, as the name suggests, grapes. As you’d expect from the place that invented the game, they had already learned how to play backgammon in Iran before arriving in Sydney in 2013 to take up study and work.

While they’ve continued to hone their backgammon skills, Fardis and Samin have been working at the University of New South Wales and Farra works at the University of Sydney. “It’s rare to find an Iranian who hasn’t played backgammon,” Farra says. “We’ve been playing with our dad since we were kids, each of us developing our own style. Dad also played growing up with his brothers and cousins. It was not optional in our family, everyone had to play backgammon.” Eldest sister Samin would be proud of occasionally beating Dad while Fardis and Farra, closer in age, taught each other through matches growing up. As three very close siblings, they have continued that tradition by constantly playing – and teaching – each other across the board.

The Farzaneh sisters have really made an impression in recent years. Fardis won the inaugural Queen of the Board tournament (Farra finished third in 2023) and Samin became the first female champion of the Sydney Bondi Edition event.

Work and study commitments restrict the women to mainly online interspersed with the Bondi events, but they hope to expand their live experience soon. They may be coming to a tournament near you.



leaderboard

Here's a look at the Top 25 ANZBGF players at the time of publication:

1	David Reitzin	1,844.63
2	Saeed Nourmohammadi	1,815.55
3	Simon Ustick	1,811.27
4	Steve Roberts	1,780.58
5	Hossein Haydari	1,772.12
6	Vince Turner	1,767.29
7	Martin Pikler	1,760.14
8	Greg Kurrell	1,748.12
9	Mick Dyett	1,740.55
10	Chris Benham	1,729.01
11	Grant Hoffman	1,728.91
12	Steve Nelson	1,727.78
13	Joanna Kerinya	1,719.51
14	Peter Brown	1,715.23
15	John Parker	1,709.52
16	Maricar Ustick	1,701.82
17	Simon Woodhead	1,697.79
18	David McAllister	1,697.72
19	Joseph Heled	1,696.54
20	Steve Quinn	1,694.45
21	Gerhardt Macor	1,693.98
22	Ahmed Moustafa	1,691.22
23	Brian Ramsey	1,687.38
24	Ben Phillips	1,684.84
25	Craig Elfenbein	1,679.57

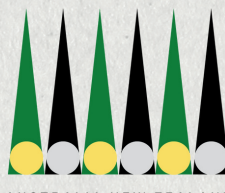


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