

President's GC Eights – 3-5 February, 2017 Cairnlea

Report by John Grieve, Chair, Tournaments and Fixtures Committee, Croquet Victoria

Cairnlea hosted the prestigious **Golf Croquet President's 8** event over three days – Friday 3 to Sunday 5 February). The top 24 ranked players (who were available) made up the first three 8s and the next ranked 8 women made up the Women's Eight

Play was held over three days with a best of three round robin format adopted. The first day was the biggest challenge for the players – they had to complete two matches (a potential of 9 games) in heat and very tiring conditions. The day started at 8 am and some of the matches were completed close to 7 pm. A long day for all concerned. The Saturday and Sunday were easier as there were two matches to play on both days.

The close results reflected the high standard of play. Players were excited to have the opportunity to hone their skills against other top ranked players in preparation for the upcoming world Championships.

The First Eight was won by Chris McWhirter from Western Australia. Chris won 6 of his 7 matches. He was beaten in the first round in two games by Terry Hopkins (Essendon) who was the eventual runner-up. Terry was beaten by Kevin Beard and Geoff Jamieson. There were some almighty battles in many of these matches. It was wonderful croquet and for those spectators a taste of what is to come with the world's best players descending on Cairnlea later in February.

The Second Eight was clearly won by Gail Hopkins. Gail has consolidated her place as one of the leading women GC players in Australia and indeed among the top flight of men and women. Gail was beaten only by Gordon Giles from Queensland. Runner up in the event was Ron McBride from South Australia. Co-incidentally this Eight was won last year by Terry Hopkins. Talk about keeping it in the family!

The Third Eight produced the only clean sweep of matches. Lester Hughes won all his matches and in the process lost only three games. Runner-up was David Wise (SA) who lost only to Lester in straight games. A very comprehensive win by Lester.

The Women's Eight turned around from Saturday evening to the close of play on Sunday. Patricia Watts (Kew) had won her first 5 matches to be the club-house leader on Saturday, only to lose her final two matches and see Shirlene McBride win her two Sunday games to come through and win by 1 match. Patricia had beaten Shirlene in their match but that proved to be the only match Shirlene lost.

Full results are on Croquetscores at <https://croquetscores.com/2017/gc/aust-presidents-eights> It takes a lot of organisation and people to prepare for these events and to keep them rolling along. **Lorraine Gutcher** was Tournament Manager and it was her first time in charge of a major ACA event. Her quiet demeanour and good planning ensured everything ran smoothly. In a tournament of firsts **Judy Stewart** was acting as tournament Referee for her first major event. Her team of referees worked hard during the three days and ensured a smooth flow of play. Players expressed their thanks and support to both Lorraine and Judy. I would thank Kevin Beard for his great support on the day before the event in assisting setting up the courts and hoop setting.

