

VETERANS CRICKET A.C.T. REPORT

2017/18 SEASON

Over 50s:

The season commenced with an invite to participate in the inaugural NSW Over 50s Club Championships. There were two teams representing the region, Queanbeyan Greybaggers (featuring players from Queanbeyan & Eastlake) and Southern NSW Eagles (featuring players from North Canberra Gungahlin and Goulburn). In all 8 teams participated with the Southern NSW Eagles defeating Warners Bay Warriors in the final.

This season the Over 50s competition featured six teams - Canberra Masters, Eastlake Demons, Goulburn Tigers, Northern Eagles Blue, Northern Eagles Gold and Queanbeyan Greybaggers. At the end of the competition, the top two teams, Northern Eagles Gold and Goulburn Tigers contested the final for the Ron Axelby Shield. In a very keenly contested match, the Northern Eagles Gold team prevailed and secured back-to-back Premierships. This year also saw the introduction of the Ron Bates Shield for the Over 50s Player of the Year, which was awarded to Joe Gunning on the back of another great season.

Representative Matches

The representative season commenced with a Canberra Cavaliers team playing in the NSW Over 50s Carnival in Armidale at the end of October. Despite a number of obstacles, Joe Gunning did a lot of great work behind the scenes to get a team together for the long trip north. Whilst there was not much success on the field, there were some very good individual performances and all those in the team had a great time.

Then, thanks to a lot of great work by Gordon McGurk and Joe Gunning, VCACT was able to field a very competitive team in the Australian Over 50s Championships in Sydney, held at the end of November. The ACT Fireballs performed well overall and whilst we only won one match, two other matches went down to the last over. A very good Western Australian team, who defeated the NSW Blues team in the final, eventually won the tournament.

Out of the tournament, an Australian squad was chosen to tour New Zealand. Gordon McGurk and Peter Solway were selected to be part of the touring team. The team arrived in Wellington on 16th February with the series kicking off a couple of days later in Nelson.

Game 1, Australia won a very tight match with Peter Solway top scoring with 66, ably supported by Gordon McGurk. The 2nd match was washed out thanks to the effect of Cyclone Gita.

Game 3 was played at Titoki, a few hours north of Auckland. Australia lost the toss and unfortunately were asked to bat first on a wet deck. Peter Solway again topped scored but it wasn't enough as New Zealand went on to win comfortably and the inaugural series was tied 1 all.

At the end of the season, another National Over 50s tournament was played in Orange over the Easter weekend. The ACT Fireballs finished 5th in a pretty good performance overall, beating the top Queensland side (who ended up reaching the final) along the way. Gordon McGurk was the best performer with both bat and ball with Boris Teodorowych, Gregg Chambers and Paul Jelfs also performing well.

Next season

The committee will continue to build on the work already done with the Veterans Competition which hopefully will see the return of the Creeky Knees team as well as a couple of new teams participating.

The representative program will begin in October with The ACT Fireballs heading north to participate in the 4th Over 50s Nationals in Brisbane. Out of that tournament, an Australian Over 50s squad will be selected to participate in the inaugural World Cup that will be played late November to early December in Sydney. Other participating countries are England, Wales, Canada, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and New Zealand.

Over 60s:

National Over 60's Championships

2017 saw the VCACT hosting the National Over 60s Cricket Championships. It is the third time that the tournament has been staged in the region with the other two occasions being in 2006 (the inaugural tournament) and in 2010.

The 12th National Championships were held from 18 to 23 November 2017. There were 32 teams from all States and Territories (NT competed for the first time) and New Zealand. These teams were divided into 4 Divisions (8 teams in each Division) over the 4 days of competition. To cater for the increasing number of individuals playing over 60's cricket in the Territory and Capital Region, three VCACT teams were entered for the first time.

VCACT was able to secure turf pitches for all matches. This could not have been done without the help of Cricket ACT and the good relationship the Veterans group have with all Grade Clubs. The organising committee would like to take this opportunity to thank Cameron French, Ben Ryan and all Club Presidents for their support and assistance in organising such a successful event.

The winners of the various divisions were as follows:

- Division 1 – Victoria 1
- Division 2 – Victoria 3
- Division 3 – Queensland 3 and Victoria 4 (joint winners)
- Division 4 – NSW 5 and Victoria 7 (joint winners)

The 3 VCACT teams performed quite well given the small numbers of over 60s cricketers to draw on in the region. In particular, the Division 1 team performed very well in defeating QLD and WA and if it were not for a number of injuries, the team could well have played in the final.

The highlight of the Championships was the dinner that was held at the Woden Southern Cross Club. A total of 500 players and their guests attended the function that was hosted by ABC Sports Presenter, Tim Gavel. This Dinner received very high praise and was regarded as being the best since the inception of the Over 60s National Championships in 2006.

Finally, the organising committee deserves congratulations for all the hard work and effort in making this a hugely successful tournament. The committee, chaired by Ron Axelby, included Bill Rowe, Murray Harrison, Anne Harrison, Asoka Wijeratne, Tony Paterson, Geoff Ledger, Steve Marshall, Ron Bates, James Martin, Denis and Helen Axelby, Ross Calvert, Greg Irvine, Wal Hall and Jennifer Axelby.

Locally

It was a very long season for a number of players with matches starting from end of July. A VCACT team headed north to the Sunshine Coast to participate in the inaugural Queensland Over 60s Winter Carnival. Whilst the carnival was all about participation (and for the team, getting away from the cold Canberra winter) the team performed well winning 3 matches and being narrowly defeated in the other match.

This season saw the inaugural NSW State Over 60s Championships, which was held in Penrith in October 2017. VCACT were invited to enter a team and it was a successful tournament as the Galaxy's won all their matches.

With no local Over 60's competition at this stage, VCACT has continued to look to Southern NSW for regular games during the 2017/18 cricket season. As has been the case for a number of years, regular home and away games are played against the Southern Highlands, Bega, Eurobodalla and Port Jackson.

To ensure that VCACT remains competitive against the larger States, efforts are being made to forge a relationship with the Albury/Wodonga Veterans Cricket group in an effort to recruit quality players to represent VCACT at future National Championships. This resulted in a game being played against Albury/Wodonga at Cootamundra in early March this year. It is hoped that this will also become a regular fixture in the over 60s cricket calendar.

The season concluded with a trip to Victoria as VCACT again entered a team in the Annual Echuca Over 60s Carnival held in March. The team performed reasonably well, winning two matches and were narrowly defeated in the other two.

Over the course of the season, a number of players performed really well with the bat or the ball or both particularly Steve Marshall, Dave Mankey, Ross Calvert, James Martin, Asoka Wijeratne, Murray Harrison and Tony Paterson.

Finally, whilst the VCACT did not have enough over 70's players to enter a stand-alone team at the inaugural National Over 70's Championships in Adelaide, a number of VCACT players were selected to play for NSW, Tasmania and South Australia. It is hoped that it will not be long before VCACT will be able to enter its own team to participate at future Championships.

Ron Axelby & Ron Bates
Veterans Cricket ACT