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Roundup of III Commonwealth Tenpin Bowling Championship

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During the inaugural Commonwealth Tenpin Bowling Championship held in Stirling, Scotland in 2002 an association of national Federations representing numerous Commonwealth countries was formed with the specific goal of staging biennial Commonwealth Championships that will ultimately meld into the official Commonwealth Games program.

Following the second successful Championship held in Cyprus, national Federations from all three geographic Zones of the sport sent officials with teams of two men and two women to compete in this year's event, hosted by Tenpin Bowling Australia in Melbourne.

Gold, Silver and Bronze medals, officially endorsed by the international Commonwealth Games Federation, were awarded in Singles, Doubles, Mixed Doubles, Teams and Masters events. Following CGF guidelines, the All-Events winners were recognised with trophies, and a stunning new Award was introduced to the Championship this year, with the generous support of the Australian Diamond Company – the TRIPLE DIAMOND PERPETUAL TROPHY, a perpetual plaque awarded to the highest aggregate Team pinfall in All-Events.

The III CTBC was launched with a spectacular Opening Ceremony featuring a march-out of Teams from the 16 competing countries:- Australia, Bahamas, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Cyprus, England, Gibraltar, Guernsey, India, Jersey, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

As key speaker at the Opening, Commonwealth Games triple Gold-medallist, Cara Honeychurch, feted as Tenpin Bowling's most successful athlete in the sport at the XVI Commonwealth Games held in Kuala Lumpur in 1998, shared her memories of the glorious success, and future potential of Bowling on the program of the Commonwealth Games.

Joining Cara at the Opening proceedings was a group of national and international VIP's including the Honorary Medical Advisor to the Commonwealth Games Federation, Dato Dr. M. Jegathesan from Malaysia, President of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association, Sam Coffa, AM, Secretary-General of FIQ, Dr. Danny Santos from The Philippines, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, Julian Pace-Bonello from Malta and members of the CTBF Executive Committee, plus officials from TBA and the Championship Organising Committee.

Messages were read on behalf of the President of the World Tenpin Bowling Association, Mr. Heikki Sarso from Finland and the President of the American Zone of FIQ/WTBA, Mr. Jose Guandique from El Salvador. The Mayor of Hobson's Bay City, Cr. Carl Marsich, welcomed visitors to the city and officially declared the Championship open after rolling the first ball at Altona's OzTenpin Bowl.

Inspired by the motto coined by the WTBA President – "EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO BOWL" - the III CTBF Championship began on a light-hearted note following the Welcome Reception that concluded the Opening ceremony. Under the supervision of Tournament Manager, Peter Coburn, an international line-up of Coaches, Managers and some unofficial officials took to the lanes, after accepting the challenge of a single game contest with the ultimate level playing field – house shoes and a house ball.

The Officials & Others event entertained bowlers and visitors alike with a unique combination of skill, and vaudeville. England's Chris Buck was just warming up in the final frames, finishing with a Turkey plus 1, and despite a strong challenge on the adjoining lanes from Mohd Razib Yahya of Malaysia, Jersey's Jim Le Lion emerged as the 2006 O & O champion on 179, 3 pins ahead of his Malaysian challenger, while Brunei Coach, ex-Melbourne bowler Mike Griffiths tied for third with Tony Galea from Gibraltar on 160.

Monday, 3rd July, saw the Championship begin in earnest, commencing with the Men's and Women's Singles events, bowled on Long Oil, and bowlers from five Commonwealth countries shared medal glory on Day 1 of the III CTBC.

26 year-old Jon Zadel from England's Midlands struck Gold in the first event with a total of 1314 for the 6-game block, including the Men's event High Game of 244. Bahama's national champion, Sonith Lockhart won the Silver, the first medal for The Bahamas in the history of the Commonwealth Championships, with a 1253 score while Australia's George Frilingos from Brisbane pipped George Lambert IV from Canada to clinch the Bronze by a single pin to finish on 1247.

Highlighting the tight finish to this event, Jason Waters from New Zealand, Mohd Noer Said from Malaysia and Cypriot Andreas Karystianos took the next three places with a margin of only ten pins between all three bowlers.

A Gold in the Teams event at the 2001 European Championships had been Zadel's previous career highlight, telling reporters following the medal presentation ceremony that he was "over the moon" with this individual win and commending the restructured training program at Team England.

Sonith Lockhart from the island of Abaco was equally jubilant with his historic medal achievement for The Bahamas. "I enjoy the camaraderie and competitiveness but at the end of the day we are all like family, hoping to see each other succeed.....this Commonwealth connection is by far the best connection in the world" added Lockhart.

Australia's George Frilingos echoed these sentiments in describing the unparalleled excitement of competing in this Championship. "This is the third time I've represented my country but the atmosphere at this tournament, Cara's inspirational words at the Opening ceremony and the tremendous sportsmanship on the lanes have combined to make the Commonwealth Championship a really unique experience" Frilingos said.

Defending CTBF Singles champion and former World Masters champion, Ann Maree Putney marked her supremacy in the Women's Singles event with a 220.50 average, including High Game honours of 258 and a 1323 pinfall, overtaking the earlier benchmark set in the Men's division by Jon Zadel.

The Gold medal performance by Putney was an uncanny repeat result from the Singles event at the previous Commonwealth Championship in Cyprus, with Caroline Lagrange from Canada winning Silver for the second time, just 34 pins behind Putney on 1289... an even closer result than the 67 margin in Cyprus.

Choy Poh Lai from Malaysia took Bronze, a mere 9 pins behind Lagrange on 1280, while Canadian teammate Jennifer Willis-Park was 4th on 1231 and early leader Ivena Heald from New Zealand slipped to 5th, just 16 pins behind Willis-Park.

The back-to-back Singles win by Ann Maree Putney was popular with both spectators and players, with Putney amiably describing herself as the "Grandma" of bowling in Australia. At 36 years of age, the Newcastle mother of two has amassed an outstanding range of titles at national and international level, with top five finishes at World competition level on 15 previous occasions.

Silver medallist Caroline Lagrange from Notre Dame des Pins in Quebec, 14 years her junior, has just graduated from the Wichita State University and been bowling since she was eight years old, while Choy Poh Lai from Malaysia's Johor province began bowling at the age of 17 and has emerged through the ranks of Malaysia's renowned development program. Second place in the recent Malaysia International Open and the CTBC Singles Bronze medal have helped elevate the 25 year-old to top position on the ABF rankings.

The Short Oil pattern on Day Two of the III CTBC was "very demanding", "mentally exhausting" and "not very forgiving" according to comments from players interviewed at the completion of the Women's Doubles.

The England duo of Katie Jowsey from Wakefield near Leeds and Fiona Banks from Sheffield top-scored with a combined pinfall of 2419 to take England's second Gold medal at the Championship, while sisters Sue Abela and Melissa Anastasi from Malta won Silver with 2349, in a popular return to the podium after their Bronze medal performance in the Doubles event in Scotland in 2002. The ladies were born in Melbourne before returning to Malta with their family as youngsters and attracted an enthusiastic throng of local supporters in their first return visit to Australia for more than 20 years.

Australia's Ann Maree Putney and Tracey Madden finished strongly on 2286 to overtake the Canadian pair of Jennifer Willis-Park and Caroline Lagrange for the Bronze. New Zealand's Julieanne Mollet had come out of the blocks at the start of play with an impressive average of 210 for her first three games, but faltered in the final three to finish with partner Ivena Heald sixth overall.

In the Men's division, Malaysia's Doubles team of Mohd Noer Said and Isaac Russell stormed home in the final two games to clinch Gold, with Mohd Noer Said's 265 in the final game overtaking the 1-game record set by England's Nick Froggatt at the inaugural Commonwealth Championship in Scotland in 2002.

The young pair from Malaysia have had several recent successes at home, Isaac Russell winning the Malaysia leg of the Asian Bowling Tour in April and Mohd Noer Said notching up a memorable four Golds from seven Bowling events at the recent National Multi-Sport Games.

Both Mohd Noer Said and Australia's George Frilingos shot 1324, and Frilingos' partnership with Australia's top-ranked Youth bowler, Glen Loader, produced a Silver medal tally of 2519, just 27 pins behind the Malaysian duo. Another strong finish by England's Dominic Barrett and Jon Zadel resulted in a thrilling tie for Bronze with the New Zealand duo of Craig Nevatt and Jason Waters on 2463.

England's 2005 top-ranked bowler Dominic Barrett joined the list of Gold medallists with a record-breaking individual series during the Mixed Doubles event on Day 3. With a 1472 pinfall, the 20 year-old from Walton on the Naze in Essex claimed the previous record of 1461 set by England bowler Nick Froggatt in 2002. Partner Fiona Banks had won Gold in the Women's Doubles event, and the Mixed Doubles win took the English team to the top of the medal tally midway through the Championship with three Gold.

Australia's youth team duo of Tracey Madden and Glen Loader had to settle for Bronze with a 2611 score, just seven pins behind their team-mates Ann Maree Putney and George Frilingos, after another stellar performance by Putney who punched out a 265 in Game 6 to overtake the hapless Canadian pair of Jonathan Simoneau and Jennifer Willis-Park, who finished on 2599. The 265 game added another record to Putney's achievements at this tournament, replacing her own 257 mark set in 2002 and delivering an identical final score of 1309 to her Doubles partner, George Frilingos.

The Mixed Teams event on Day 4 was bowled on dual lane conditions – the first three games on Short Oil and the final three on Long Oil. Team Canada withstood determined challenges from England, Australia and Malta to strike Gold for the first time at this year's Championship and the victory was sweet after Gold had also eluded Canada several times at the previous Championship in Cyprus.

All four Canadian bowlers posted clean games in the sixth to notch up an impressive 878 and a total pinfall of 4969 for the series. The Australian bowlers overcame an unsteady second game and finished strongly to take Silver on 4852, while a disappointing final game for Malta enabled England to slip past them by just 39 pins to bag the Bronze.

England's Dual-Gold medallist Fiona Banks took the Women's High Game honours with a 276 to set a new 1-game Teams record, previously held by Donna Adams, while Canadian George Lambert's 278 eclipsed the 269 record set by Jason Belmonte in Scotland. Nick Froggatt's 6-game benchmark of 1410 and the women's record of 1379 held by Shalin Zulkifli, both set in Scotland in 2002, remain unassailed.

Top seed in the Men's division going into the Masters on the penultimate day of play was Dominic Barrett from England on 5170, and Ann Maree Putney from Australia topped the Women's division on 5011. Bowlers from nine of the 16 countries represented at the III Commonwealth Tenpin Bowling Championship figured in the Masters line-up.

Following the first 6 games on Short Oil on Day 5, Australia's George Frilingos took a handy lead ahead of Malaysia's Doubles Gold medallist, Mohd Noer Said, with 12th

place qualifier Ray Falzon Reale from Malta lying in third position. In the Women's division, Fiona Banks from England won all six of her matches to establish a decisive lead over Canada's Willis-Park and Malaysia's Choy Poh Lai, in an exciting prelude to the final day's play.

An exuberant crowd of locals and overseas visitors cheered George Frilingos and Fiona Banks to victory in the final matches of the Masters Stepladder final. Top seed Frilingos recovered from a 41 pin deficit in the first of the 2-game final to take the coveted Masters Gold by a slim 2 pin margin, (170-211, and 208-165) from Malaysia's Mohd Noer Said. Said advanced to the final by defeating England's Jon Zadel 223-186 after Zadel uncharacteristically opened in two frames in the single-game Semi-final.

On the adjoining lanes, the first match of the Women's stepladder final saw Canada's Jennifer Willis-Park eliminate Australia's Ann Maree Putney in a close game, 213-210 to then face an in-form Fiona Banks from England in the 2-game final. The plucky Canadian established a 3 pin lead after both bowlers opened frames in the first game, but Fiona Banks closed the gap to clinch the Gold medal, 199-202 and 233-222.

A colourful closing ceremony and trophy presentation acknowledged the All-Events winners – Australia's Ann Maree Putney from Newcastle and Dominic Barrett from Essex in England. The TRIPLE DIAMOND PERPETUAL TROPHY, denoting the three Zones of the sport encompassed by the Commonwealth, was then presented to the inaugural Award winner, Team Australia, on behalf of donor, the Australian Diamond Company.

The ceremony culminated with a flag-bearing march-out of the Men's and Women's Masters medal-winners and their Coaches, with Commonwealth Games Federation CEO, Michael Hooper presenting the CGF-endorsed medals to the Masters champions and placegetters. Michael Hooper addressed competitors and officials, commending the Commonwealth Tenpin Bowling Federation for staging its third successful Championship and encouraging its members to expand the circle of participating countries as widely as possible in future Championships.

The popularity of the Championship with players, officials and spectators can be gauged by the widespread media coverage attracted in the lead up to, and since the completion of the event in regional and national newspapers, radio and television programs, and via international websites and industry magazines. The official site – www.2006ctbc.com recorded almost half a million page hits and full scores, photo gallery and details of the final medal tally and records achieved at the III CTBC can be accessed via this site.

England's Jon Zadel summed up the 'down-under' experience neatly ... *"It was hard to imagine what to expect, competing in the Commonwealth Championship for the first time – it's been a real eye opener, playing on the world circuit...it went very smoothly, not a single technical hitch throughout the event – the people here are amazing...we've had a lot of fun outside the bowling too with sightseeing..."*.

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Commonwealth Tenpin Bowling Federation Congress

Delegates attending the Congress meeting held on 7 July during the Championships ratified the application by the Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Association to join the Commonwealth Tenpin Bowling Federation and voted to maintain the nominal annual membership fees for CTBF members.

The incumbent Executive Committee of the CTBF – President Julian Pace-Bonello from Malta, Secretary-General Lynne Clay from Australia, Sidney Tung representing Asia, Pat White representing Europe and Cathy Innes representing the American Zone members – were unanimously re-elected and the nomination by Roger Christofides from Cyprus for the position of Vice-President was also unanimously approved.

Several countries expressed interest in staging the 2008, 2010 and 2012 Commonwealth Championships and an announcement is expected in coming weeks regarding the venue for the IV Commonwealth Tenpin Bowling Championship.

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