

Public Course Pennants / Grand Finals / Sunday 26 March 2023.

Well, we know how it ended, but how did we get there?

In stark contrast to last week's bucolic paradise, Echunga and the weather turned on the misery today from the word 'go'. Steady light rain across the morning and temperatures in the low teens added to the challenge this course normally provides.

Division 1

Fresh from a week off, NAGC took on the defending champion, Sandy Creek, keen to amend for last year's loss. And they did so in a determined and dominant display.

Will Phelan playing at #8 opened the account with a solid 3&2 win. By midway through the back nine, North Adelaide was reeling off a succession of strong wins almost simultaneously across the four groups to put the matter beyond doubt.

Skipper, Shaun Dawson (3&1), John Filmalter (6&4), Henry Park (4&3), Chantha Kong (4&3) and Alex Martinson (5&3) stitched the championship up, rendering the matches of Yungbok Kim and Steve Darch effectively dead rubbers... and so declared squared matches. Steve's match was into its second playoff hole (i.e. match squared at 18 with that hole played again twice(!) to get a result) when they were called in.

All-in-all, a superb run for this side which has used this competition as a vital tune-up for the A2 and Bonnar Cup pennants competitions starting at the end of April.

Division 2

Going wire-to-wire across an entire competition is not the easiest feat, but as pacesetter of their Division, NAGC did it in style.

While surprise finalist, Mawson Lakes was no pushover, the Red shirts proved too strong when it mattered seizing the required 5 wins from the 13th hole onward. First out at #8, Frank Kong continued his commanding form romping home 6&5. His partner, Jonathan Gravenor took his match to 17 before falling short. The second pairing of skipper Anthony Clapp (2&1) and veteran Bob Henley (4&3) put one hand on the championship with their wins, after which the third group, Paul Haines (6&5) and Atila Koca (3&2) grabbed it with the other.

Alice Cho was unsuccessful in her match at 17, but by that time it was all over, with Chris Watson's match declared squared and a second championship heading to North Adelaide.

A fitting reward for a beautifully-balanced and cohesive team that met every expectation sought of its talent and experience.

Division 3

And finally, to the wonderful world of handicap matchplay where beating your opponent by one stroke is not always the end of the matter.

North Adelaide hasn't had a Division 3 champion since the inaugural PCP side in 2017, but today that changed in a final that was ultimately decided at the 18th hole of the last match.

This was a 'battle of the seconds' with North Adelaide and North Haven both entering the final after toppling the leaders of the Northern and Southern divisions, and it turned out to be a thriller.

The first pairing of Brett Heaven and Dee Bennett got the team off to a flying start with 4&3 wins each, Brett with a 2-stroke advantage and Dee with 3. Ian George added to the account with a fighting 3&2 victory overcoming a 4-stroke buffer to his opponent.

From there things got wobbly, with Rory Cho, Luis Plaza and Luis Madriz unsuccessful despite getting to the closing holes. Tom Ryke at #2 however, in another great win overcame an 8-stroke disadvantage to storm home 7&5 and seal the vital fourth win.

Mathematically, the title was already sealed even if the final finished at 4-all, by virtue of NAGC's greater number of holes won... but Tim Haskett had other ideas.

Despite conceding two strokes to his opponent, the A1 champion persisted and prevailed with a par at the final hole to win 1-up, and secure the title 5 games to 3... the win completing the North Adelaide red-wash across all three divisions.

A momentous, extraordinary, and historic day for our little club.

In closing, huge thanks to Alan and Marcia Potts for their tireless and superhuman efforts in ensuring this competition is as well run as it is. Also to match referee, Peter Norman, who made sure he was quick to the scene to dispense accurate rulings when and as required across the day.

To the barbecue crew today: Carla Hirst and Karen Forrest, ably assisted by Alice Cho; and all who volunteered to keep the troops fed during the season, thank you from the bottom of our stomachs.

Echunga has provided a magnificent setting for the PCP deciders. Our thanks to the management and staff not only for making the course available as our finals venue but for the fine condition it was in. We look forward to returning next year.

Finally, to the players, officials, and supporters from all the participating clubs: Sandy Creek, Mawson Lakes, North Haven, Marion Park, Regency Park, Playford Lakes, API and our own North Adelaide... this would not be the fiercely contested competition that it's become without you all!

We'll see you all again next year.