

AUSTRALIA WIN TIGHT PBA TRANS TASMAN CHALLENGE

Australia beat New Zealand in a tight catch-up 2022 Professional Bowls Association Challenge with the round robin preliminary rounds proving the closest ever between the two sides. Australia pipped NZ in three rounds to two, though the kiwis won in 13 matches to 12, however when the top three from each side came through to playoff in the final round, it was the hosts that swept the visitors in all three encounters to win the Challenge at the Mandurah Club in Perth.

21 year old Jack East lead the Australians with four wins out of five only dropping his match to Gavin Scrivener and won his play-off against the best kiwi Sheldon Bagrie-Howley 8-3, 9-7. Bagrie-Howley and the next best NZer Scrivener both also had four wins in the round-robin stages and shared the same number of sets, however a bigger differential in his last game saw the Southlander take the top spot. Scrivener went down in the battle of the second bests losing to Blake Butler 11-1, 9-5. In the match between the third best players from each side Australia's Connor Biddle beat NZ's Craig Merrilees 10-2, 4-8, 2-1.

Bagrie-Howley keeps his spot for the return 2023 edition in New Zealand in September as the best performed kiwi, but as he was also the NZ PBA's number one ranked player last year, the fifth ranked player from 2022 is added to the top four. Therefore the rest of the team will be Ray Martin, Craig Tinker, Ross Ellery and Merrilees will return for his eighth consecutive Challenge.

The next NZ PBA action will be at King's Birthday Weekend with action all weekend in Auckland using a new venue Royal Oak, New Plymouth, Dunedin and Invercargill. Wellington will just be playing on the Monday for their Shanghai Singles qualifier. Entries close by the Friday a week before.

Information including an application form, entry forms, dates and venues for the NZ PBA can be found on the worldbowlstour.org site under PBA – New Zealand.

Results of the 2022 PBA Australia v New Zealand Challenge:

Round 1: Jack East (Aus) bt Andrew Kelly (NZ) 11-4, 12-8; Ray Martin (NZ) bt Lisa Featherby (Aus) 11-4, 15-1; Sheldon Bagrie-Howley (NZ) bt Paul Davies (Aus) 9-5, 8-6; Gavin Scrivener (NZ) bt Connor Biddle (Aus) 8-8, 8-4; Craig Merrilees (NZ) bt Blake Butler (Aus) 7-5, 8-5. NZ wins round 4-1

Round 2: East (Aus) bt Merrilees (NZ) 7-9, 11-9, 2-0; Featherby (Aus) bt Kelly (NZ) 1-11, 7-5, 2-1; Davies (Aus) bt Martin (NZ) 8-5, 10-4; Bagrie-Howley (NZ) bt Biddle (Aus) 6-5, 4-8, 2-1; Butler (Aus) bt Scrivener (NZ) 8-7, 8-6. Aus wins round 4-1

Round 3: Scrivener (NZ) bt East (Aus) 7-7, 9-7; Featherby (Aus) bt Merrilees (NZ) 9-5, 5-11, 2-1; Kelly (NZ) bt Davies (Aus) 6-5, 13-4; Martin (NZ) bt Biddle (Aus) 8-5, 13-3; Bagrie-Howley (NZ) bt Butler (Aus) 10-3, 7-9, 2-0. NZ wins round 4-1.

Round 4: East (Aus) bt Bagrie-Howley (NZ) 7-4, 10-11, 2-0; Scrivener (NZ) bt Featherby (Aus) 9-4, 9-6; Merrilees (NZ) bt Davies (Aus) 7-6, 11-7; Biddle (Aus) bt Kelly (NZ) 8-8, 7-6; Butler (Aus) bt Martin (NZ) 6-4, 6-7, 2-0. Aus wins round 3-2.

Round 5: East (Aus) bt Martin (NZ) 8-7, 9-5; Bagrie-Howley (NZ) bt Featherby (Aus) 10-1, 10-7; Scrivener (NZ) bt Davies (Aus) 7-6, 5-4; Biddle (Aus) bt Merrilees (NZ) 12-7, 7-5; Butler (Aus) bt Kelly (NZ) 9-8, 11-3. Aus wins round 3-2.

Aus standings: East 4 wins; Butler 3 wins; Biddle 2 wins 5 sets; Featherby 2 wins 2 sets; Davies 1 win.

NZ standings: Bagrie-Howley 4 wins 7 sets +18; Scrivener 4 wins 7 sets +13; Merrilees 2 wins 6 sets; Martin 2 wins 5 sets; Kelly 1 win.

Playoffs: 1sts - Jack East (Aus) bt Sheldon Bagrie-Howley (NZ) 8-3, 9-7; 2nds – Blake Butler (Aus) bt Gavin Scrivener (NZ) 11-1, 9-5; Connor Biddle (Aus) bt Craig Merrilees (NZ) 10-2, 4-8, 2-1. Aus win Challenge 3-0.

