



Strictly Business For Weekend Warriors

TODAY is the business end of this championship's qualifying series, out of which three players from each section will graduate to tomorrow's elimination finals. The reward for being top qualifier in each of the sections is direct entry to the semi finals, while those finishing in second and third places will battle it out for the other spots in the respective final fours.

It goes without saying that on these magnificent Burnside greens every shot will matter as those on or near the top of their section set themselves – like a champion jockey positioning a galloper at the home turn - for their run to the finish line. There will be many big moments out there today.

There were many big moments yesterday too - like the morning battle for supremacy in women's section two between unbeaten former world champions Lorna Smith from Scotland and Norfolk Island's Carmen Anderson; and that marvellous high noon shootout between youngsters Dylan Fisher from Australia and Jersey's Malcolm de Sousa that attracted such a large crowd – and certainly lived up to all expectations.

And what about Macao's Johnny Ng, who won two rounds yesterday, including the prized scalp of 1998 Commonwealth Games singles gold medallist Roy Garden from Zimbabwe? No doubt his fellow members at the Monte Carlo Sports Club will congratulate this career-highlight victory when Johnny returns to the island next week.

Likewise for everyone's favourite lady, Lebo Mascarenhas from Botswana, who dropped her two opening matches to the aforementioned Smith and Anderson, but has since prevailed in seven consecutive matches - by far the best return by a Botswana representative since this event first appeared on the international calendar.

Lebo needs to win one of her two matches today to guarantee a start in tomorrow's play-offs alongside Smith and Anderson as top qualifiers in section two. Hot favourite Karen Murphy, the reigning world outdoor singles champion from Australia, will finish on top of section one, while English livewire Amy Truran has done enough to claim the second spot. However, Saskia Schaft from the Netherlands and Israel's Irit Grencel will both be striving for section one's third berth in Saturday's action. Ironically, both have to play Canada's Shirley Fitzpatrick-Wong, who was in seductive form yesterday – so it could be very interesting indeed.

Teenage sensation Dylan Fisher will be top qualifier in men's section one, even if he misses out in his much-anticipated meeting with Ireland great Ian McClure on rink twelve first up this morning, while at noon McClure meets Malcolm de Sousa on rink 10. The possible scenarios are so many and varied that this section's placings will not be finalised until the last bowl in the Round 13 match on rink 20, between Scotland's Alastair White and big Roy Garden from Zimbabwe comes to rest.

It's a similar story in men's section two where four players are vying for the three promotion slots and the final outcome may well be decided with a calculator. However, find yourself a vantage point somewhere near rink eleven for today's last session when New Zealand representative Shaun Scott, from the North East Valley club, faces Welshman Robert Weale, the reigning Commonwealth Games singles champion in what will be a Battle Royale with direct promotion to the semi final being the victor's spoils.

And best news yet – the weather should be great – we hope (gulp!).



• Macao's Johnny Ng in action yesterday.



• Jersey southpaw Malcolm de Sousa.



• Botswana's much-loved Lebo Mascarenhas.