

Countdown to the Gold and the Glory

Competitors in Christchurch for the Asia Pacific Bowls Championships have now passed the halfway point of qualifying for leading roles in the blue ribbon men's singles and fours, along with the women's pairs and triples.

Today and tomorrow, on the lightning fast greens of the Bowls Papanui and Burnside clubs, players from the eighteen competing nations must stake their claim for a berth in Thursday's elimination and semi finals.

For those who pass sport's toughest examination paper, then play exquisitely to clinch a tier on the medal rostrum, there is a lifetime of community fame and deity-like status amongst their peers waiting.

Here's a tip: For those of you who are contemplating a visit to Burnside today, be early and jump straight across to Rink 12 where you can witness a showdown of epic proportions when NZ hero Mike Kernaghan goes head-to-head with Canada's Ryan Bester. They are two of the finest singles players in the sport and their match will see the classic draw bowler against the aggressive, take-no-prisoners, hard man. You be the judge.

Bester lost his second match yesterday afternoon, but contrary to some opinion, it was no shock result. His opponent was classy



• NZ skipper Sandra Keith.

Malaysian Hizlee Rais, who in 2012 won the world singles title at the Athena Beach Resort in Paphos on the island of Cyprus. Ironically, Sandra Keith, who is skipping the unbeaten New Zealand triples team this week, won the women's equivalent the same year. Interesting that the Atlantic Championships, for European, African and United Kingdom bowling nations, commenced at Athena Beach overnight.

However, spectators did witness a

couple of 'unexpected' results yesterday – especially the fledgling Brunei women's triple of Esma Wandy Brahim, Suhana Daud and Bella Chuchu, who did a number on their stellar Australian counterparts Carla Odgers, Anne Johns and Natsha Scott.

And what about Japan's Kenta Hasebe, who has been a constant newsmaker since the opening ceremony? Yesterday in the men's singles he unseated former world champion Aron Sherriff from Australia, who had been unbeaten and unchallenged all week. Ironically, it was Sherriff who skipped his Aussie 'Dream Team' partners Wayne Ruediger and Mark Casey when Hasebe's Japanese trio pulled off the biggest upset of the year last Friday afternoon.

We've had heaps of feedback about the youngest competitor in these championships. It's 14-year-old Adoni Wichman-Rairoa who is playing the lead position in the Cook Islands men's fours team. The bright-eyed youngster has been playing for six years, and all reports suggest he ticks most of the boxes for future success.

As the leader boards sit overnight, Australia and New Zealand are on top of three sections apiece, while Norfolk Island and Canada hold sway on one each. But cometh the moment.

The countdown is well and truly on.