

Last roll of the dice for contenders

Our suggestion to be at Burnside early yesterday for the men's singles shootout between reigning NZ national champion Mike Kernaghan and world number two Ryan Bester from Canada proved well-founded.

The clash between the grand warriors was an absolute blockbuster that underpinned the mental toughness, deft touch and great power world-class singles exponents must possess.

Bester grabbed the early run before Kernaghan employed a series of fine conversion shots to be just one in arrears at 11-12. However, after two days of struggling to find rhythm and fighting the elements and lightning fast greens that New Zealand is renowned for, Bester was on song. So was his driving – no-one does it better in the game.

And even though Kernaghan continued to surround the jack with quality wood, Bester either crunched unfavourable heads to all parts of the green, plucked the Blackjack star's really close shots out of the counting area, or found a drawing option to gain the advantage. He won 21-15 and the possibility of a return bout later this week in the play-offs is too seductive to resist.

So, let's have a look at some of today's scenarios. In men's singles section 1 Kernaghan will finish on top, while Bester's two untimely losses will see him in an elimination final along with Malaysia's Hizlee Rais. Australian Aron Sherriff, a former world singles champion of champions, owns the semi final



• *Canada's Ryan Bester in action at Burnside yesterday*

berth from section 2, and Kenta Hasebe from Japan is safe, while the winner of this morning's Ken Chan versus Sunil Bahadur battle will secure the other elimination final spot.

In section 1 of the men's fours competition, the powerhouse Australian quartet of Ray Pearse, Wayne Ruediger, Nathan Rice and Mark Casey are unbeaten and only a catastrophic event can halt their march to tomorrow's semi finals. Hong Kong China appears set for an eliminator, while a few wise heads are suggesting that fifth placed Norfolk Island can barge into contention if they win both starts today.

Section two see the unbeaten Blackjacks Mike Nagy, Andrew Kelly, Shannon McIlroy and Paul Girdler playing USA's Bill Brault, Scott Roberts, Aaron Zangl and Charlie Herbert for the semi final berth. Simple as that –

while the loser and Malaysia are both guaranteed places in tomorrow's eliminations.

Malaysian world champions Siti Zalina Ahmad and Emma Saroji will emerge from section 1 of the women's pairs with a guaranteed medal, while Blackjacks Jo Edwards and Val Smith along with Carmen Anderson and Petal Jones from Norfolk Island will appear in tomorrow morning's elimination finals.

In section 2 Aussie world champions Karen Murphy and Kelsey Cottrell are unbeaten and have a certain bronze medal, while Canada and the Philippines are secure in the minor placings.

But it is the women's triples that will attract most attention today. Three teams are on equal points in section 1, where the wash-up is that Australia's Carla Odgers, Anne Johns and Natasha Scott play Canada's Shirley Fitzpatrick-Wong, Harriette Pituley and Kelly McKerihen this morning and the winner claims a semi final berth. Fiji is assured of the other elimination final berth.

In the corresponding section undefeated Blackjacks Katelyn Inch, Angela Boyd and Sandra Keith must defend their top position against Hong Kong China's Angela Chau, Mercredi Yeung and Amy Choi. Should the HKC trio snatch an eight shot win they will clinch the semi final position. The Philippines trio of Hazel Jagonoy, Ronalyn Greenlees and Rosita Bradborn are assured of third place and a start tomorrow. Enjoy!