REFEREE REPORT

2009 Sunshine Coast Open

The second Sunshine Coast Open was held at the University of the Sunshine Coast Sports Stadium on the weekend of May 9 & 10. The number of competitors was slightly down from those in 2008, mainly due to the unavoidable proximity of the tournament to the previous weekend's Queensland Senior Closed Championship in Mackay. Of particular concern, however, was that only one female entry was received.

It was pleasing to see that the tournament organizers addressed several issues from the previous year and did a magnificent job in preparing for this tournament. Due to the nature of the venue, this entailed many hours of work putting black sheeting over high windows and doors. In addition, an eating area was erected outside with cooking and eating facilities which were a great improvement on the commercial food van that operated last year. There were many more volunteers present, easily identified by wearing red caps, all with their own jobs which were carried out very efficiently and enthusiastically. This included numerous local players who willingly umpired many matches when asked, enabling the tournament to run very smoothly.

The configuration of the courts was altered for this year, again showing the thought and effort by the organizers. Only eight courts were used, six facing in a different direction which enabled them to be much bigger than in 2008. Four large overhead lights were hung from the ceiling to supplement the venue's own lighting. This improved the overall lighting, especially over Courts 2 and 5 which were mainly used for finals or other important matches. The air-conditioning was operating throughout and made conditions very pleasant for the players and spectators. An innovation that was very thoughtful and successful was to display specially prepared signs on court for all semi-finals and finals, showing the event and stage of event (s/f or F). *A possible addition could be to use sponsors logos on these signs.*

The organizing committee again did considerable work in preparation for the tournament, particularly with gaining sponsorship. The local council contributed a sizeable grant to pay for the hire of the venue while other sponsors ensured that prizemoney for the graded events was at least the equal of other Queensland tournaments. An Audi car was on display in recognition of a local dealer's sponsorship. The manager attended for a short time while the Open events were being played and was very impressed with the set-up and the organization. The Association is to be congratulated for their efforts to obtain this amount of sponsorship and for their efforts to promote and thank the sponsors.

Publicity was also well organized. Two articles were published in the Sunshine Coast Daily prior to the tournament, a reporter visited during Saturday's events and a report was published on the following Wednesday. Both Channel Seven and Nine took footage and conducted interviews with reports scheduled for their news sports segments.

A competition to identify photos of celebrities playing table tennis was another popular and innovative idea that kept players and spectators interested and intrigued over the weekend.

Most of the events began close to their advertised times and generally finished in an acceptable amount of time. The round robins for the Mens Open Singles were played prior to the Open Doubles, followed by the knockout section of the singles. This was an improvement on 2008.

The B Grade events were held on the Saturday afternoon to reduce the number of events on Sunday. This was also a very successful move, as there were more players and spectators present while the Open events were played, and the Sunday programme was much easier to conduct.

It is suggested that *consideration be given to including D Grade events* in future. These could be played either in conjunction with the Open and B Grade events on Saturday or with the A Reserve events on Sunday.

With reference to the earlier comment about the lack of female players, it is suggested that *events for women and girls be advertised in all sections of the tournament (Juniors, Veterans, grades).* If sufficient females enter, the object of the exercise will have been achieved; if not, then the event/s can be combined with the male equivalent.

Other suggestions are that the *Association's club phone number* be printed on the entry form for players to use if running late, etc. Also *signs requesting player report to the tournament control desk on arrival* could be displayed at various locations as very few players did this so that tournament controllers were not always sure if a player had arrived.

Prizemoney for the Open events was again very generous while all other events were on the 50% / 25% basis used by most associations. The organizing committee rejected entries from several players who entered C Grade as they were considered too strong. These players were notified of this decision before the tournament. In almost all cases, the results of these players at the tournament fully justified the organisers' actions and the association is to be congratulated on taking this strong stance. *It is recommended that a player considered too strong for a particular grade should not be allowed to play in that grade's doubles, regardless of whom they have nominated as a partner (eg Daniel & Courtney Rose in C Grade Doubles).*

Umpiring was generally on the "Loser umpire" system with which the players conformed excellently throughout the tournament. Also, besides the local volunteers mentioned earlier, Mick and Matthew McShane travelled from Brisbane on the Saturday afternoon to umpire for several hours, while Greg Dinsey also umpired numerous matches including several finals when he was not occupied with playing or coaching.

Player behavior was excellent for almost all of the tournament. Only two incidents occurred, with only one requiring intervention by the referee, with one player being spoken to about his on-court behavior.

The Sunshine Coast Table Tennis Club are to be congratulated again for organizing an extremely well-run tournament. It is hoped that they will have greater success in future years in being able to hold the tournament at a more suitable time which will encourage many more players from across the age groups and grades to enter.

Dave Delpratt (Referee) 12/5/09