

On-Kow Au's 2024 March library newsletter

(A) The main feature of the March issue of "Bowls International" magazine is the review of the 2024 World Indoor Bowls Championships. This event was well received by the public with good comments. Not to mention the TV coverage by BBC, Just by the social media platforms alone, it hit nearly five million viewers. There are quite a number of interesting articles in this supplement. I only picked up 2 of them.

(1) Sian Honnor interviewed 15-year-old Desmond Lai from Hong Kong, who was the youngest qualifier ever to take centre stage in the open singles.

Desmond started bowling at the age of eight as a result of watching his father representing Asia Bowling Club. Then he joined the Young Athletes Scheme by HKLBA and played with others of a similar age and achieved good records in competitive bowling. At just 14, he won the qualifying event for the Hong Kong PBA. He'd entered the event in 2022 and reached the quarter-finals but this year more than 130 people entered the competition.

He won seven games in order to qualify, including beating Vivian Yip in the semi-final and Hong Kong national member Imen Tang in the final.

He felt strong support from family, teammates, coaches, teachers and classmates. He knew many of them having watched live streaming (3.30 am morning in Hong Kong) and school teachers and classmates watched his game together on YouTube the next day at school.

As this was his first time playing there, he felt nervous because his opponent Mike Stepney was world class. He stayed until the end of the event to learn as much as he could from the other players. His future hopes are to win the national singles and to qualify again in Potters.

(2) John Rednall considers the finals of the open singles and ladies' singles were among the best ever and Julie Forrest's leading with two bowls in the mixed pairs final was one of the best demonstrations of two-bowl leading to ever take place on the portable rink.

The open singles final game between Stewart Anderson and Alex Marshall displayed high standards of accuracy. Both players are great all-rounders, executing every shot with aplomb, either drawing to displaced jack, to respots and to the ditch were all impressively demonstrated, but it was the unerring consistency of lead bowls that showed Anderson to be the most consistent 'machine' in the final.

As a specialist lead himself, John analyses the game by focusing on the quality of the players' first bowl and how successfully they back it up or correct it with the second delivery. Stewart and Alex both had a very high percentage of effective bowls, but it was Stewart who claimed victory as a result of closer leading with the first two bowls.

John also suggests some tips for playing good opening bowls when leading or playing singles.

(B) Bowling videos

(1) Winter games in most countries go indoors in the winter season. Not in places like Hong Kong. Let's watch the Hong Kong 2023 Winter National Finals which took place a few weeks ago. This video consists of three parts: the finals of Men's Triples, Women's Pairs and Men's Fours. The Men's Triples is a good game to watch. Both teams played shots, especially the skips.

[youtube.com/watch?v=2arqDXz8KR0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2arqDXz8KR0)

(2) What do you consider to be a good game? We expect to see good draw bowls, skillful conversion shots, accurate drive shots and well planned strategies, etc. Close games are good. Yet it is also exciting to see how the losing team claws back to win.

Let me tell you my story. This is my worst experience, and at the same time, my best memory of my first big game.

Date back in 1989 in Hong Kong. I was only a second year bowler. Together with three other sophomores from my club, we ventured to play in the 'Colony Fours' which was one of the major games of the year. With beginner's luck, we made it to the final. And our opponent, the defending champion, was a strong team made up of Hong Kong National team members.

We played on a neutral green which was quite tricky. My team was slow in adjustment. At the 10th end, we were down 1:15. Some of our supporters were disappointed and left. I felt sorry for myself. Then we tried hard to make the scoreboard look better. We gradually caught up to double figures. Coming to the last end, we were still down five points. When I was ready to roll my last bowl, my hands were sweating. So I wiped my hand with the cloth and delivered my bowl. To my embarrassment, it was a wrong bias. Funny enough, my opponent quickly sent out her last bowl aimlessly which also rolled out of the boundary. Then, a miraculous thing happened. As all the bowls were spreading apart from the jack, after lots of measuring, surprisingly, we won five points. In the extra end, my vice, Grace Chu played a beautiful trailing shot and we won the game. This made headlines in the sports column of the English newspaper "South China Morning Post" and our picture was hung up on the wall of the club house. I got hooked on this sport ever since.

In bowling games, a lot of unexpected things would happen. People might simply call it 'luck'. Actually, there's more than that. I remember an interesting game which was amazingly out of expectation.

In the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland bowling stars Aex Marshall and Paul Foster played the men's pairs game against South Africa's top bowlers Gerry Baker and J. Evan in the round robin. The team of Baker and Evan played extremely well and was leading a lot until the last three ends. It seemed impossible for Scotland to win. But Marshall made the impossible possible. In the last end, Marshall played with strong will power to win a five-ender.

Enjoy the game and learn from it.

[youtube.com/watch?v=b1D2UIrQZU8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1D2UIrQZU8)

I have been writing this library newsletter for over ten years. I'm thankful for your positive feedback and support all this time. But I have to accept the fact that when you come to a certain age, your body doesn't function as well as before. My eyesight starts bothering me and I have to restrain my time in reading and using the computer. It is time for me to take a break.

Wish you all good health and to continue playing and watching bowling videos.

How to improve yourself in bowling?

Go to play games. Always remember - first, you learn why you lose, then you learn how to win.

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