

## 28<sup>th</sup> Australian Hickory Shaft Open Championship- Melbourne 2023

### Event Summary



#### *Playing group before hitting off at Woodlands GC*

The 28<sup>th</sup> playing of the Australian Hickory Shaft Championship was recently played on Melbourne's world-renowned Sand belt courses. The courses were set up for hickory play and although the clubs are 100 + years old the winning scores were surprisingly low.

Hickory players from around Australia, as well as, for the first time, contingents from New Zealand and Japan, competed for the Championship and handicap trophies.

The new Sandy Golf Links course hosted the Foursomes on Day 1. The weather was superb, and the course was in excellent condition. There were some fine scores and an excellent score of 72 was posted. New Zealanders Catherine Palmer and Mark Lawson took home the trophy. Runners up were Mike Clayton & Terry Thornton with a 76. Darryn Watt & Andrew Baker won the handicap section with Nett 70.6.



**Foursome's winners Catherine Palmer & Mark Lawson flanked by handicap winners Darryn Watt & Andrew Baker.**

The main Championship event is played over 36 holes with Round One at Woodlands GC and the final round at Kingston Heath GC. The hickory clubs used in the event would have been similar to the clubs used by the founding fathers of both courses, which were established in the mid 1920's.

Woodlands presented the course in immaculate condition; however, the weather was not kind with wind and some rain. This did not deter the players who braved the conditions, some recording excellent scores.

The highlight of the day was the after-dinner guest speakers. Australian PGA CEO, Gavin Kirkman spoke of the history, his recent experiences and future development of the PGA. Bruce Green, PGA Life Member, and long-term professional at Royal Melbourne followed and was thoroughly entertaining as he took us through his colourful career.

The early start for the final round at Kingston Heath was bleak, cold, and wet, but as one player noted "these are the conditions they play in all the time in Scotland!!" and nothing could deter playing on one of the world's best courses.

A superb second round of 74 by Richard Macafee gave him a record low of 148, to secure the Men's Championship trophy over NSW's Tim Sayers on 162.

Richard, a long-time member of Kingston Heath, has a fast-growing passion for hickory golf. "I finally got my own hickories, and to play with my own set was unbelievable... I'll be doing it a lot more now", he said.

In the Women's Championship, the first day at Woodlands was New Zealand's Catherine Palmer's first full round with hickory clubs, but she didn't let that stop her from taking out the title with an impressive score of 169. She commented "back home in Christchurch, I'd just been playing nine holes, and these fast and firm courses, made it a lot more challenging,"



**Champions Richard Macafee and Catherine Palmer with Golf Australia's CEO James Sutherland**

**The handicap section was a close contest between Golf Society members with Justin Ryan on 154 edging out Mango Maguire on 155.**



**Handicap winner Justin Ryan with James Sutherland**

The inaugural Asia Pacific Hickory Championship, sponsored by the US's Society of Hickory Golfers (SoHG) was played in conjunction with the Australian event, with Richard and Catherine are now also the Asia Pacific Hickory Champions. Australia won the Teams event.

SoHG's President Joe Hollerbach sent a congratulatory message and his summary "may your hickory golf journeys be filled with continued joy, camaraderie and excellence" really summed up the occasion.

Most of the Internationals struggled a little with the close-cut fairways and firm fast greens, but all had terrific experiences. Off course they visited Australia's best shop for hickories at Ormond hosted by the owner, Ross Baker, the most knowledgeable person in Australia on hickories. The Japanese contingent went mad and most bought a couple of sets, seems they can't get originals in Japan only replicas. The Kiwi's secured some Australian clubs – they claim they were returning them home as like many things originated in New Zealand... a standing joke!!

The week marked another successful event organised by Australian Golf Heritage Society and the Golf Society of Australia, alongside the Society of Hickory Golfers, who continue to celebrate golf's origins and rich tradition.

### Other photos



### Foursomes group on first tee

Justin Ryan/Richard Macafee, Terry Thornton/Mike Clayton, Catherine Palmer (her caddie)/Mark Lawson



### New Zealand Team



### The Japanese Team





**Asia Pacific Hickory Champions Catherine Palmer, Richard Macafee with James Sutherland**