

MacRobertson Shield 2010

Australia v New Zealand

6-10 August 2010

Heaton Park, Manchester

Day One

The weather was damp and not very warm (ie typical British summer) with the lawns running at about 11.5 seconds. New Zealand got out of the blocks very quickly and were 2 games up within an hour. Australia fought back well, however. In their first Test matches, Robert Fletcher made a seamless break to 4-back while Kevin Beard hit a long roquet and made a great first Mac hoop from a difficult angle. Meanwhile Ian Dumergue, after a wobbly start, completed the team's first triple peel and Martin Clarke hit a long one and made 9. In the end, New Zealand proved to be the more consistent side, despite their poor hit rate, and stormed to a 2-0 lead at lunch. Robert and Ian saved the day and by 3.40pm, Robert had completed his first Mac triple and win. It was a good performance by Australia on a day when there were very few errors made by either team.

In the other match, USA took a surprise 2-1 lead over hosts Great Britain, despite 2 triples by GB's new boy, Ian Lines.

Results

Stephen Forster & Martin Clarke v Paddy Chapman & Aaron Westerby 0-26 tp (PC), 10-26 tp (AW)

Robert Fletcher & Ian Dumergue v Greg Bryant & Jenny Clarke 26-0 tp (ID), 0-26, 26-3 tp (RF)

Pete Landrebe & Kevin Beard v Paul Skinley & Michael Wright 0-26 tp (PS), 2-26 tp (PS)

Day 2

The day began reasonably dry with the lawn speed at 13 seconds, but a couple of heavy showers soon put paid to that. This time it was Australia who came out of the blocks firing with Kevin and Marty leading the charge. Kevin carved out a great break with a 40 yard rush to hoop 1, while Marty hit a long one and advanced to 4-back. Stephen then had a nice break but was unfortunate to be hampered after 3-back. New Zealand were now making errors and still missing their shots, but to their credit they managed to turn this around and had a prolonged period of dominance just before lunch. Australia's errors were rather unfortunate but turned the match somewhat.

After lunch, the sun came out for the first time in a week, and the tables turned again as Robert capitalised on a great saving break by Ian Dumergue (including a "death" hoop 2 from 4 yards at an angle to level their match at 1-1. On the next court, Marty hit and made yet another solid break to 4-back. However, it was to be NZ's day again and it took a magnificent Test Match by Ian & Robert to pull back one match. In their final game, Robert hit on the 3rd turn to make 9 before Ian completed the match in style with a 5th turn triple.

The Australian team has no worries at this stage and intend to wipe out the 2-4 deficit in tomorrow's 6 singles games.

In the other Test, England came good demolishing USA 3-0 to take a 4-2 lead.

Results

Stephen Forster & Martin Clarke v Greg Bryant & Jenny Clarke 26-1, 20-26, 9-26

Robert Fletcher & Ian Dumergue v Paul Skinley & Michael Wright 6-26 tp (PS), 26-23 tp (RF), 26-0 tp (ID) 5th turn

Pete Landrebe & Kevin Beard v Paddy Chapman & Aaron Westerby 21-26 tp (PC), 0-26 tp (PC)

Day 3

A good start by Australia did not translate into games won here on the third day at Heaton Park. All the Aussies were on court together early on, but only Robert could capitalize by winning his first game with a triple against Aaron Westerby. Again, NZ dominated the hour before lunch leaving me wondering if our Team had had enough breakfast! But again the dice turned and Stephen completed a fine triple under pressure to level his match against NZ No.1 Paddy Chapman. Later, Robert completed his match after an uncharacteristic missed hoop by Westerby. But the others struggled and Chapman went on to complete his match against Stephen.

After lunch, the Aussies came out with renewed grit with Pete, Ian, and Marty giving themselves the chance of an early break. As well, Kevin and Pete both started great comebacks to level their matches at 1-1, Pete with a triple and Kevin doing 3 peels but missing the pegout. It was not to last, however, as NZ played excellent croquet, carving out further wins to race to a 4-1 lead on the day before Kevin pulled off a magnificent win over Jenny Clarke with a triple in the 3rd. The match score now stands at 4-8 with 9 matches left to play. A 3-0 for Australia in tomorrow's final doubles round would come in very handy.

GB did not have it all their own way in the other Test match, but ended the day leading USA, also by an 8-4 scoreline.

Results

Robert Fletcher	v	Aaron Westerby	26-0 tp, 26-17 tp
Stephen Forster	v	Paddy Chapman	0-26 tp, 26-10 tp, 26-0 tp
Ian Dumergue	v	Paul Skinley	9-26, 0-26 tp
Martin Clarke	v	Greg Bryant	1-26 tp, 1-26 tp
Pete Landrebe	v	Michael Wright	16-26 tp, 26-9 tp, 0-26
Kevin Beard	v	Jenny Williams	9-26, 26-22, 26-1 tp

Day 4

The sun shone this morning, right up until doubles play began at 10am – then it became grey and eventually wet! Both Marty and Kevin ran excellent breaks to 4-back first up which, with the NZ flag set upside down by Charles, was a good omen for Australia. In the other games, Chapman got off to a flier but Robert hit back and made a good 9. By 11.30, after the snack box had been circulated at 11, Stephen had completed a good triple in the rain to take the first game of the day. However, the next 2 games were NZ's, and they began the second round of games with a 2-1 advantage in breaks which they have enjoyed since day 1. That didn't last, however, as Pete made 9 to be followed by a triple by Kevin to level the match. Meanwhile, Robert had pegged out Aaron's ball. So at lunch, two matches were tied 1-1, and the other had NZ up a game but in a precarious position in the second.

While NZ sneaked a win in the pegged out game, the other 2 matches went Australia's way in fine style with a 3rd game triple by Stephen which was described as "unconventional but with flair", and then almost one by Kevin (he missed the pegout) to put the Team 2-1 up on the day. More importantly, the Team now goes into the vital last day on a high, and they mean to be successful in all 6 singles matches tomorrow.

USA are faring rather better against the holders GB across town at Bowden, where GB lead by only 8-7.

Results

Stephen Forster & Martin Clarke v Paul Skinley & Michael Wright 26-0 tp (SF), 0-26 tp (PS), 26-0 tp (SF)

Robert Fletcher & Ian Dumergue v Paddy Chapman & Aaron Westerby 9-26, 13-26

Pete Landrebe & Kevin Beard v Greg Bryant & Jenny Clarke 9-26 tp (GB), 26-0 tp (KB), 26-9

Day 5

Needing to win 5 of the 6 singles, the day began brightly for Australia. The sun shone and in 3 out of 4 games, Australians were soon playing breaks. Westerby, however, proved the thorn in the side as he streaked away for an early triple against the luckless Stephen. Mid-morning there was an incident when Jenny Clarke, playing Pete, rushed a ball into the jaws in error, which probably would have resulted in the end of her turn. She claimed the ball was wedged and asked for a replay which she was given, and all but finished the game on that turn. There were 3 other incidents of a similar nature as the courts dried out and drew the hoops in. On the brighter side, the other 3 lawns were occupied by Australians at this time, and the snackbox was circulating! At lunch, Australia were level in one match and down 1 game in each of the others. Sadly soon after lunch Westerby finished off his match after Steohen missed his pegout, and at 3.15pm, Skinley finished in the 3rd against Marty to win New Zealand the Test Match.

Australia won its first match soon after when Captain Pete finished a somewhat scrappy match but then Ian lost to Bryant in a fine, largely error-free match. That left late-starters Kevin and Robert on court. Robert played a magnificent match against NZ No.1 Paddy Chapman, completing a tpo and a 5th turn triple. Meanwhile Kevin lost in 2 games despite being the better player.

GB won the other Test match against USA but only by a score of 12-9.

I was proud of the way the Australian team played, despite the scoreline. There is still much to play for as all 4 teams appear to be evenly matched in this year's competition, and every team could easily lose at least 1 match.

Results

Robert Fletcher v Paddy Chapman 26-13 tpo, 26-0 tp 5th

Stephen Forster v Aaron Westerby 0-26 tp, 26-25

Ian Dumergue v Greg Bryant 16-26 tpo, 26-0 tp, 0-26 tp

Martin Clarke v Paul Skinley 15-26 tp, 26-0, 0-26 tp

Pete Landrebe v Jenny Williams 2-26, 26-1, 26-10

Kevin Beard v Michael Wright 22-26, 25-26

Match Score: AU 8 NZ 13