**2013 PRESIDENT'S SHIELD GIRLS MANAGER REPORT**

So once again, the Nationals were held in Sydney and it was decided to drive down again. However this year we hired our own bus and Peter Bowling was our driver along with Greg Naylor, Mr President. While this did save us money initially, it makes for one very tired group of bowlers and management. With the event being held in the same bowl again, I certainly recommend that we fly down and hire two mini buses. We were lucky that we had Greg and also Rob McDonald there with their cars to make these trips instead of having to cart the whole team to the shops after a long day in the bowl.

The accommodation at Sydney Gateway Holiday Park was on a whole a good choice. 4 villas all next to each other which means we didn’t have to walk long distances to the other rooms. Unfortunately the living areas were very narrow which did make it difficult when having team meetings and meals however on a whole I was very happy with the accommodation. In saying that, we were further out from the bowl this year which combined with Sydney traffic, made for some very long days. Next year’s accommodation has already been booked and is in Parramatta. The units look very nice and hopefully a bit roomier.

This year we spaced the scheduled squads over a few days as we found last year the bowlers were finding it a struggle to do them all in one day after such a long bus trip. We arrived in Sydney around 11.30am and were able to drop off the bowling gear at the bowl and enjoy a cup of coffee before heading to the accommodation. We headed back to the bowl for dinner and their first squad of singles. Saturday we were able to have a bit more of a leisurely start than usual as our first event was the teams at 10.30am. We ended up eating at the bowl before heading back to the units for a rest before going back for the later squads. By spreading out the squads, the bowlers got a chance of bowling on the fresh and on the oil as last year many had struggled on the fresh. We booked extra squads this year so to avoid the problem of previous years where bowlers were wanting to still qualify for Masters and Classic but squads were already full.

The Royal Rumble was once again fantastic and we had some awesome costumes. The ‘boys’ dressed as “Hohn’s Ho’s” were a real hit with the crowd and they really played up to their parts. Kudos to Nick’s Mum for making his costume. He really looked the part. For a last minute costume, “Sean’s Zombies” came out really good. After the first round, we had all four teams moving into the 2nd stage. Following this we had 2 teams moving forward into the 3rd and 4th rounds. Following the final “Hohn’s Ho’s” finished in 2nd place and “Sean’s Zombies” finished in 5th. It was a really great night and was good to see the kids all letting their hair down and having some fun.

Due to some flooding problems at AMF Blacktown, the Classic Cup was held at Lidcombe. Qualifying had proved tough again but we managed to have 3 girls and 1 boy all qualify – Vicki Canfield (4th), Ashleigh Caldwell (10th), Rachel Manskie (16th) and Brendan Woodley (20th). Conditions were certainly challenging and there were many bowlers who struggled but after a final push, Rachel hung in there to be awarded 3rd place. Well done Rachel and an enormous effort girls. Was also great to see the boys won by a fellow Queenslander Matt Clague.

Once again we enjoyed a lovely BBQ dinner with the parents and supporters on the Monday night before Shield and presented the team shirts. Thanks again to all our helpers for manning the BBQ. Awesome dinner. And it was wonderful to have a great BBQ area where everyone could sit and enjoy their meal.

Unfortunately internal problems which had begun before the trip impacted severly on the girls’ team and quickly escalated once in camp, also affecting the boys’ team. Several times the entire group was sat down together and told in no uncertain terms that they needed to get over whatever problems they had and work together as a team. I do believe that outside influences did contribute to this situation before and during the trip even telling other state teams that the SQ girls team was falling apart.

After lunch on Day 2, the girls’ seemed to turn a corner and came out firing taking 5, 5 then 4. They started off fantastic on the 3rd day but seemed to falter after lunch. Going into the 2nd last game of the day, combined we were in 2nd by half a point. As they began to struggle in the 17th game, the mood quickly shifted and nothing could lift them. By then, I did not know what else we could do to help them. Going into the last game, I just told the girls to go out there and have some fun. We were playing against Nth Qld which was an awesome way to finish off the tournament. The mood did lift during this game and we once again saw the girls working as a team and bowling well but unfortunately for us, the Nth Qld girls had a fantastic game.

This was a potential gold medal team which was simply pulled apart by internal conflict. Conflict that at some points would appear to be resolved but unfortunately at the end of the day, could not be pushed aside in time. While the first day and a half was a real struggle, these girls fired up and clawed their way back when many other states had written them off. At the end of the day it may not have been enough but they certainly contributed to the team gaining the Bronze for 3rd combined.

The final game against Nth Qld would actually have to be a highlight of the whole event. The boys team were certainly on fire and could have sat out the last game and still taken the gold. The scores were fairly even and overall could have gone either way. With 5 boys ageing out for us and 2 or 3 boys for NQ, they stood as one group arm in arm cheering each other on and chanting “last frame” and “last shot”. At the end of the match, there were certainly quite a few tears as we all hugged. Certainly was a fantastic way to finish off Shield.

Masters began on Friday and we had 6 girls and 6 boys (including one of our development boys) that had qualified. Special mention must go to Makayla Tritton for finishing equal 5th on her very first time in a National Masters. Fantastic effort Makayla. Very proud of you girl!

Once again, this year we provided all meals and snacks for the entire trip. Lunches consisted of bread and rolls with a variety of fillings which the bowlers chose themselves. Home-cooked meals were also a big hit with the kids especially the potato bake, macaroni and cheese, tacos and Donna’s famous Sausage Slop. A big thank you to Grant, Donna, Greg, Karen, Alice and Leanne for their work in the kitchen after some long days. While we took care of the meals, Karen, Alice and Leanne were busy getting the snacks ready for the next day, unpacking and repacking everything again, stocking up the water bottle holders. These ladies were just unbelievable and nothing was too much trouble. The bowlers intake of water this year was once again very good and by the last day, we had gone through almost all the water. Again we believe this practice along with the home-cooked meals not only helped their performance. Unfortunately this year we did have quite a bit of sickness hit several members of the team. The change in weather certainly affected many with several runny noses, coughing and flu symptoms.

**To our management team** – thank you all so much for your enormous efforts up to and during the trip. We certainly had a tougher year but managed to get through and still come out with a medal.

**Donna** – What can I say! Gold for the boys team 3 years in a row. Would have to be one of the most successful female coaches in Australia. You give it everything you have and certainly wear your heart on your sleeve when it comes to these kids. Thanks again for everything.

**Alice** – You are an absolute gem and a real pleasure to have on board as a manager. No job was too much trouble and your assistance helped to make things run that much smoother and certainly decreased my workload this year.

**Josh** – You have done a tremendous job with the development squad and I have no doubt we will be seeing some of them in the state team in the future. Thank you also for all your assistance during the trip. It was great to have another pair of hands to help out wherever necessary and to assist also on the lanes during the squads and masters.

**Karen** – You have been an enormous help to me personally over the last year. Always willing to help out whenever possible and your efforts while we were away were just incredible. You and Alice made a great team when it came to arranging all the snacks each day, doing the washing and helping with all the meals and the shopping.

**Wade** – What can I say, once again you proved how worthwhile it is to have a Technical Advisor. Your knowledge and assistance with the bowlers not just on ball selection but also lane conditions is certainly invaluable and I hope you will come back again.

**Leanne** – You are one fantastic person and it was such a pleasure to have you as part of the team this year. Even though your official position was First Aid, you didn’t mind jumping in and helping out wherever needed. From helping with the cooking, snacks, shopping - nothing was too much trouble. And it was wonderful to have someone experienced with diabetes who could keep such a close eye on one of the bowlers, constantly monitoring her levels to ensure she was okay. Thanks again Leanne.

**Greg –** El Presidente!Once again your support and guidance for the entire management team was fantastic and personally I thank you for all that you do. Also a big thanks again for all the running around in Sydney and for helping with the cooking and cleaning. Don’t know many others who would do that.

**Lyn –** Your photos are just wonderful and thank you again for being there to capture so many moments which I have no doubt many people will treasure.

**To all our parents and supporters** – Thank you once again for your continued support of the bowlers and our management team. Nothing was too much trouble and your support is always appreciated.

**TBAQ** – thank you once again for your guidance and continued support of our association. We are learning more every year and your faith in us has never wavered.

**Grant** – My girls’ team coach and partner. We certainly do make a great team. Your passion to see these kids be the best that they can be is just incredible and you never cease to amaze me with your dedication to them and the sport. I know this was a tougher year and personally I saw how it affected you when the girls did not achieve the results that we know they are capable of. But we did the best we could and that is all anyone can do.

**My Girls Team** – Maddy Kemp, Rachel Manskie, Gabbie Vettiger, Rebecca Cohen, Vicki Canfield, Ashleigh Caldwell and Makayla Tritton. I know that there were problems and I know it can be hard to put them aside but that is what you have to do as a team. While you may have had a shaky start to shield, you certainly did come out and work as a team. Unfortunately it may have been too late to win the gold, but you certainly gave it your best shot and I dare anyone to say otherwise. Also big thanks to our captain Maddy Kemp. When a team has personal differences it can be very hard to captain but you managed to do that with tact and diplomacy and I know firsthand who hard it affected you when there was problems. But you can hold your head high and be proud of your efforts and those of your teammates. I am very proud of you all and hope you are also.

In closing, I know there were posts on Facebook about how the girls’ team cost us the Shield. Personally I take great offence at these comments. The girls know exactly what went wrong and feel bad enough already but they do not need comments such as these publicly on display from people who possibly bowled at a time of easier house patterns. These conditions were still tough and any other team will attest to that. Yes, they could have done better; yes they let personal differences interfere with their game but at the end of the day, they tried to change that around and worked as a team. Unfortunately it may have been too late by that time but at least they tried. They are still all winners in my eyes!

**Wendy Otago**

**Girls Manager 2013**