

Good afternoon all,

I must say that April was super intense in bowling events, with an international championship held locally, 2 open competitions abroad, one for youths and another one for seniors, the European Youth Championships, as well as the popular Gold Cup tournament, not to mention the 3 MSV Life Leagues which are nearing their end.



Div 3: Central Bank of Malta (66), One 4 All (60), Vintage (58) – one week to go.

Div 2: Bank of Valletta (108), MIA (87) and Blitzkrieg (85), till week 15

Div 1: Fina (86), okmalta.com (84), Turu's Knights (60) – till week 13

The **Composite average** for the 4<sup>th</sup> month of the year is quite high compared to other years:

Males: Mauro Anastasi (220.44), Kenneth Arpa (212.31) and Justin Caruana Scicluna (210.95)

Females: Sue Abela (208.26), Sara Xuereb (195.59), and Cynthia Duca (193.81).

Youths Males U19: Matthew Magro (202.61), Nicholas Muscat (197.73) and Miguel Xuereb (195.57).

Youth Females U19: Sara Xuereb (195.59), Raquel Xuereb (163.37), and Ruslana Grima (146.75).

### **MEDITERRANEAN BOWLING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The highlight of the month was without doubt the Mediterranean Championships as the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition was held in Malta. This year we had a record number of 16 teams, with 3 teams participating for the first time: Kosovo, Egypt and Portugal. Team Malta was represented by Sue Abela, Sara Xuereb, Justin Caruana Scicluna and Sue Abela.



The first event was the Singles. In the Ladies' Category, Sara Xuereb ended in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, whilst Sue Abela won a silver medal, which meant Malta had two ladies on the podium for the same event. The afternoon saw Malta clinch another silver won by Mauro Anastasi playing an impressive 238 average. Justin Caruana Scicluna finished in 18<sup>th</sup> place.



Wednesday we had the male and female doubles. Justin and Mauro played a total of 1170 and a 1255 respectively to finish in 5<sup>th</sup> place, just 30 pins shy of 3<sup>rd</sup> place. On the other hand, our super ladies rolled a 1294 (Sara) and 1194 (Sue) to clinch a prestigious gold medal, much to the euphoria of the Maltese supporters who screamed the place down.



Thursday, we had the mixed doubles with Team A composed of Sue and Justin finishing in 18<sup>th</sup> place (2248) and Team B composed of Sara and Mauro placing 13<sup>th</sup> (2356).

Malta started a bit slow for the 4-person team event, but a good 886 game in the 4<sup>th</sup> gave them a good push upwards to 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Unfortunately, a big last game from Cyprus and Greece, saw Malta having to settle for 5<sup>th</sup> place, as the bronze went to Cyprus, with Malta missing a medal for just 42 pins.

With these results counting for the All Event medals, we had Sue winning a silver, and Sara clinching a bronze in the ladies' category. In the men's section, Mauro succeeded in winning a silver medal, and this was the highest ever placing by any male Maltese in the All Events, from the year 2000 onwards, excluding the first 3 years when there were only 4 countries playing.



Last day we had the Masters, with Sara beating Turkey's Ebru by a solitary pin, Sue winning against Eliave from Israel (397 – 310) and Mauro beating Spain's Javier (429-403).

All 3 proceeded to the semi-finals. Sara was defeated by Delphine of France (376 – 428) and won a bronze medal in return. However, both Sue and Mauro made it to the finals, Sue beating Martha from Greece, and Mauro eliminating Julian from France.

The finals were Sue against Delphine of France and Mauro against Taygun of Turkey. Both Maltese lost their encounter, Sue by just 3 pins and Mauro (353-393) with both winning a coveted Silver medal.



Malta bagged a staggering 10 medal in this year's edition: 1 gold, 6 silver and 3 bronze, which is the same total we had bagged in Slovenia during 2013, when Malta won 3 gold and 7 bronze medals. Malta was also the country which won most medals during this event.

## ZURICH 5<sup>TH</sup> YOUTH OPEN

4 of our youths went to participate in the 5<sup>th</sup> Zurich Youth Open, namely Kayden Lagana, Dwayne Zahra, Chris and Kathryn Fenech. They were accompanied by National Sport School Coach Rick Vogelesang.



Our Youths played 12 games, and their best 6 games, then determined the placing as follows:

Kayden Lagana – 3<sup>rd</sup> place with a 1135 scratch and 28 age handicap for a total of 1303

Dwayne Zahra – 14<sup>th</sup> place with a 1092 scratch and 20 age handicap for a total of 1213

Christopher Fenech – 50<sup>th</sup> place with an 895 and 24 age handicap for a total of 1039

Kathryn Fenech – 62<sup>nd</sup> place with a 759 and 24 age handicap for a total of 903

This was from a total of 64 players.

With this result Kayden and Dwayne moved to a next level, playing 4 games. Both managed to proceed to the next step, with Kayden finishing in 4<sup>th</sup> position rolling a 725 scratch, and Dwayne in 14<sup>th</sup> place bowling a 694 series.



Bowling another 4 games Dwayne managed a grand total of 2779 complete with handicap for a final 14<sup>th</sup> position. Kayden on the other hand rolled a total of 2899 to clinch the 5<sup>th</sup> place, such a feat for an 11-year old. Kayden also bowled his PB for a 4-game series (725) and 6 game series (1135).



### **EUROPEAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS - VIENNA**

5 of our Youths went to participate in the EYC Vienna, this year being the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year of a Maltese team participation. Team was composed of Matthew Magro, Miguel Xuereb, Kurt Attard, Edward Xuereb and Sara Xuereb. They were accompanied by the Youth Academy coach Mark Spiteri, as well as 12 keen supporters.



**Day 1** saw the boys playing the doubles' event. Team A was composed of Miguel Xuereb and Matthew Magro, whilst team B we had Kurt Attard and Edward Xuereb. Team B placed 38<sup>th</sup> – 174.42 average out of 46 teams, whilst Team A placed in the 17<sup>th</sup> position with a 194.58 average, this being the best position so far in such championships.



**Day 2** was the girls' doubles and Sara Xuereb had to play solo as there were no other Maltese girls and no pacer either. Sara started on shaky footing and could only manage a low 1009.

**Day 3** we had the boys 4 men team. The Maltese boys fought hard, starting with a brilliant 837 and up till the 5<sup>th</sup> game were within reach of the top 4 to make the podium. Unfortunately, a 737 saw them finish in 10<sup>th</sup> place from 22 teams, though this was once again the best position for the team event during the EYC.



Although Sara could not place in the team event, she still bowled her series to count in the all events. She played much better than the first day and a 1178 saw her climb up from 65<sup>th</sup> place to a decent 31<sup>st</sup> position in the All Events.

The Boys' Singles were played on **Day 5**, and the best show was from Miguel Xuereb who rolled a 1149 series, placing 42<sup>nd</sup> out of a strong field of 95 boys. Matthew Magro rolled a 1113 finishing in 53<sup>rd</sup> place, Edward Xuereb 1067, 66<sup>th</sup> position and Kurt Attard 1048 in 70<sup>th</sup> place.

**Day 6** was the turning point day. Sara bounced back in the singles, determined to make the top 24, which she did with ease. Playing a good 1248 series, she placed in 1<sup>st</sup> place from squad A much to the cheer of the Maltese supporters, who then had to wait the painstakingly lengthy wait for squad B to finish. Everyone was in a state of euphoria as Sara made it in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, thus clinching a place in the knock out stage, ascertaining a medal in her bag, and clamber the steep hill to a 14<sup>th</sup> position in the All Events, thus securing a place for the Masters.

Her first game for the Singles' finals was against Nele Niehusen from Germany and she easily won the game 166 – 210. Then she went on to face Russia's Victoria Kashirskaya and unfortunately lost 172 – 193. However, Sara proudly got a silver medal in the Singles' event, the first of its kind for any Maltese youth bowler.



Adding all 3 series together, these were the placings in the All Events BOYS:

Miguel Xuereb – 195 ave – 30<sup>th</sup> place (this was the highest placing so far in the boys' All Events)

Matthew Magro – 193.1 – 39<sup>th</sup> place

Edward Xuereb – 183.6 – 55<sup>th</sup> place

Kurt Attard – 178.6 – 67<sup>th</sup> place

Sara placed in 14<sup>th</sup> place with a 190.8 average. This meant she would proceed to the Masters in a 3-game format. Her first opponent was England's Lucy Williams and Sara managed to win the first two games 182-180 and 224-199 to move to Step 2.

Her 2<sup>nd</sup> step was against Peppi Konsteri of Finland who incidentally was the girl who beat Raquel last year in Step 1. Sara made sure she avenged her sister and finished off the Finnish girl 176-222 and 188-203.

Sara's next rival was Sweden's two-handed Nora Johansson. This was a much harder encounter and whilst Sara lost the first match 190-166, she managed to win the 2<sup>nd</sup> match 170-173 to force a decider. The 3<sup>rd</sup> game was a nail-biting experience, but in the end, it was Sara who ended as the winner with a 206-200 game, much to the jubilation of the Maltese crowd.



Step 4, was incidentally against another Swede, Hannah Engberg who had won the gold medal for the Ladies' All Events, as well as a bronze in the doubles, and a bronze in the 4 ladies' team event, so we knew the going would get tougher. Hannah won the first game 196-167, but then Sara bounced back 169-176 to force another match. However, Hannah ended as the eventual winner with a 224-194, with Sara defending her 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the masters, belting another bronze medal.





Once again hats off to the full team starting from the players, coach as well as the supporters.

### **FRANCE SENIOR OPEN**

Sue Abela went to participate in 8th Track ISBT Open in France. After qualifying directly to the finals with her 4th place finish in the qualifiers, with a 202 scratch average. She went on to play a brilliant 208 scratch average in the round robin, where she won 4 of her 7 direct clashes. This was enough to get her to second place, with the winner being local Jacqueline Faure who managed to win all 7 direct clashes that gave her more bonus points than Sue.

This was another good show by Sue, who this same month had just added another 3 silver as well as a gold medal during the Mediterranean Championships.



## PRIME MINISTER'S AWARDS

This month was a brilliant month for bowling, as we bagged another haul of 4 bronze, 7 silver and a gold medal. Due to this show the Prime Minister invited first the MBC winners, with Sara missing out as she was working her way to winning 2 other medals in the EYC. Then there was an invitation for the EYC team. Unfortunately, Matthew Magro missed out as he had an A Level on the day, but his father Jason collected on his behalf.



## GOLD CUP

The ever-popular Gold Cup handicap tournament saw 36 competitors, 10 ladies and 26 males. The pattern was the current league one, and we've had some amazing scores especially from the Youths.



First, we had a new youth record bowled by 14-year-old Dwayne Zahra – a brilliant 1336 series, to supersede the previous record held by Kurt Attard by 3 pins. He also bowled his PB in a 5 game series - 1078. Then others played their PB's: a 1138 6 game series for Chris Fenech, a 1247 6 game series and a 245 game by Dylan Santillo, a 1152 6 game series by Reuben Scerri, Nicholas Muscat 1037 5 game series, and a 254 game, 1204 6 game series, and 945 5-game series for Kayden Lagana. Juliana Bonanno also bowled a 279, and though she does not count as a youth anymore it is still a huge feat!

Other than that, after the 12-game series over 2 days, we had Juliana Bonanno leading the female section, followed by Amanda Cini, Liliana Spiteri and then 3 Special Olympic Bowlers, Jessica Farrugia, Natasha Bianchi and Miriana Pace. As usual, the boys' competition is much keener, and the fight tends to be harsher. Day 1 we had Dylan Santillo leading, followed by Dwayne Zahra, Nicholas Muscat, Daniel Ricciari, Ian Formosa and Bjorn Tabone. Day 2 saw some changes and although the top 3 players retained the lead, a superhuman effort by the young Lagana saw him shoot a brilliant 1204 + 120 handicap to leap from 12<sup>th</sup> place straight to 4<sup>th</sup>, Kurt Attard rolling a good 1268 series to improve from 11<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>, whilst Ian Formosa dropped to a 1054 + 108 handicap to hang on to the 6<sup>th</sup> place. It is very satisfying to note that out of the 6 male players, 5 of them are still youths: two 18-year olds, two 14- year olds, and one not even a teenager yet.

Nothing changed after the round robin in the ladies' division, as all top 3 ladies, ie, Juliana, Amanda and Liliana lost a game each, and thus retained the top 3 places. The other 3 placings were Natasha, Jessica and Miriana.

On the other hand, the males' round robin saw Dwayne bowling a scratch 1078 series with 4 wins to nip 1<sup>st</sup> place, Nicholas rolled a 1037 scratch series and 3 wins to improve to 2<sup>nd</sup>, whilst Dylan rolled an 873 plus 3 wins to nip the 3<sup>rd</sup> place by 4 pins. 4<sup>th</sup> place went to Kayden, 5<sup>th</sup> to Ian Formosa, and 6<sup>th</sup> Kurt Attard.



During the step ladder Amanda beat Liliana 203-168, whilst Nicholas beat Dylan 252-202.

Amanda then faced Juliana in a very close game, which Juliana won 201-198 to be crowned Gold Cup champion for the 1<sup>st</sup> time.

Nicholas faced Dwayne, and easily won the first match 175-213 to force another game, since Dwayne was the first seeded. Game 2 was a nail-biting affair, with both 14 year olds giving it their all, and only a cruel 4, 7, 10 split by Dwayne gave the chance to Nicolas who struck out for a 229-227 game finish, to win the title. Hats off to Dwayne though who finished the tournament on a 210.58 scratch average.

Therefore, this year's Gold Cup Champions are both first timers: Juliana Bonanno and Nicholas Muscat.



I wish you all a good day!

Regards

Liliana