

Pro women tourney is still on the cards

by Nicholas Boyack

The collapse of the New Zealand Women's Golf Classic is not all bad news for the Hutt Golf Club.

In late December promoter Frank Burgess announced that the event would not be going ahead due to a lack of funding. The Serious Fraud Office has subsequently become involved after a complaint was laid by the New Zealand Community Trust.

Hutt manager Paddy Wells says the club is not directly out of pocket as Mr Burgess met his payments to the club. But green keeping staff had carried out a lot of work developing and improving the course. They are paid a salary and if their time had been costed out, the payments received by the club would not have covered the cost.

However, the improvements have significantly improved the facility and members now have a better course, he says.

Mr Wells has had no recent contact with Mr Burgess. The club is waiting to hear from the Serious Fraud Office and will provide it with any information it requires.

Asked why the club did not check out Mr Burgess's background, Mr Wells says that he gave the impression that he had the expertise to promote the event. He kept up to date with his payments until December and gave no indication that he did not have the funds to run the tournament, until shortly before he called it off.

The good news is that Australian

golf management company Tuohy Associates, which is suing Mr Burgess, has indicated it plans to run an event in New Zealand.

The enthusiastic response to the proposed New Zealand event impressed them greatly, says Mr Wells.

Whilst there had been a problem with the promoter, the Hutt Golf Club had shown it was up to holding such an event.

There is a gap in the market for a professional women's event and he says Tuohy Associates is keen to hold a tournament here.

Mr Wells concedes the Ladies' European Tour will need convincing that the organisers are genuine and have the ability to make it succeed.

Tuohy Associates organises a number of major tournaments in Australia and have a good reputation, he says. If all goes well, the tournament could be held next year at the Hutt Golf Club.

Capital's best to be rewarded

■ SPORTS AWARDS
PETER BIDWELL

GOLFER Lynnette Brooky, mountain runner Jonathan Wyatt and cricketer Stephen Fleming appear to have the best chances of overall victory at the Wellington Sportsperson of the Year awards tonight.

Brooky won the Open de France tournament last year, which allowed her to finish well up on the European women's tour. Her efforts would appear superior to the Commonwealth Games silver and bronze medals won by weightlifter Olivia Baker and the bronze won by swimmer Toni Jeffs, the other women's finalists.

Wyatt excelled in winning the world title to enhance New Zealand's mountain running reputation. Despite New Zealand's disappointing losses to Australia and India in the World Cup, Fleming led the Black Caps to test and one-day series wins against India and an historic test series win in the Caribbean. His one-day century against South Africa in the cup was regarded as arguably New Zealand's best one-day innings.

All Black and Hurricanes rugby loose forward Rodney So'oialo was the other men's finalist.

The teams section also qualifies for the overall award, and the three nominations — the Wellington men's hockey side, the Miramar Rangers soccer squad and the Titahi Bay surf boat crew — all won national titles.

The awards night is sponsored by NewstalkZB.

The finalists:

Sportswoman of the year: Lynnette Brooky (golf), Toni Jeffs (swimming), Olivia Baker (weightlifting).

Sportsman of the year: Stephen Fleming (cricket), Jonathan Wyatt (mountain running), Rodney So'oialo (rugby).

Coach of the year: Peter Russell (rugby), Stu Jacobs (soccer), Mick Waitt (soccer).

Team of the year: Wellington men's hockey team, Miramar Rangers (soccer), Titahi Bay surf boat crew (surf lifesaving).

Administrator of the year: David Crocker (basketball), Steve Dunbar (rugby), Leslie Wilkinson (tennis).

Personality of the year: Bernie Portenski (athletics), Suzie Pearce (hockey), Tana Umaga (rugby).

Official (umpire/referee) of the year: Averil Roberts (table tennis), Stephen Noble (tennis), Liz Burman (water polo).

Emerging sportsperson of the year: Ma'a Nonu (rugby), Eden Marama (tennis), Robbie McMillan (yachting).

Other awards to be given on the night: athlete with disability; fair play; volunteer of the year; lifetime contribution to sport; overall sportsperson of the year.