



The Pennant

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Grand Final Preview

We are down to the last weekend of the season and the final two in each grade will take to the greens at **Queanbeyan RSL Memorial Bowling Club** this weekend to determine our champions. Bowls ACT wish to congratulate all the clubs, members, volunteers and supporters for their efforts in making the 2023 season a great one! I look forward to seeing everyone across the weekend and see some great bowls played.

Today we take a deep dive into each grade and look at some key match-ups which might shape who walks away as champions and offer a final word for the fans.

Nick Hind – Bowls ACT Executive Officer

Grade 1

Weston Creek (Regular Season - 2nd) v Belconnen (1st)

Congratulations if this was your quinella going into the season! While Belconnen were the 2022 Champions in Grade 1, they did it the hard way coming from fourth overall to claim the title. Weston Creek missed the finals by 12 points last year so to bounce back the way we have seen in 2023 is a great credit to the club and members.

Weston Creek will be relying on skip Ian Whybrow, who is 3/3 against Belconnen this season, to show the way. The Peter Watts rink for Belconnen might respond having hit some serious form and is the danger, capable of racking up some big scores. Wattsie most recently claimed Belcos only rink win against Doug Farr in the Major Semi-Final loss to Weston Creek and backed-up to be the difference in the Prelim Final against Canberra with a big win over James Reynolds.

Final word: Is one club two wins better than the other this year? If you think so then Weston Creek is the team you must pick, anything else and it's Belconnen squaring up the season two-all, but getting the flag in the biggest game of the year.



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Grade 2

Goulburn Railway (1st) v Yass (2nd)

Both clubs are keen to claim a flag with Goulburn Railway and Yass both finalists in Grade 2 in last year and boasting formidable line-ups with plenty of representative talent across both squads. Yass and Goulburn Railway must be credited for impressive seasons in all grades and both will be keen to win the day with big support likely in-venue and perhaps a couple of flags already waiting at home.

Yass sprung an upset of sorts in the Major Semi-Final to claim victory over Goulburn and progress to the Grand-Final in a game which Marg Bacchetto was most influential, but neither she nor her Yass teammates will expect an easy time this weekend with all three Goulburn skips, Ward, Guyer and Drysdale having positive win percentages and shot differentials. Up front might prove the difference with ACT junior representative Tom Penyu having a great season as lead for Yass and Robert Seaman the best for Railway.

Final Word: Both clubs will be pleased with their seasons across all grades, but this is the one they will both really want to win. I'm not game to hang my reputation on a result, so expect top bowls and maybe a bit of luck to be the deciding factor.

Grade 3

Vikings (1st) v Queanbeyan (2nd)

Cream has risen in the finals and the depth of both Tuggeranong and Queanbeyan is on display here with Vikings having a Grade 1 and Queanbeyan Grades 1 and 2 sides to fill and still being the best two in Grade 3. Neither club competed in Grade 3 in 2022 so form is hard to gauge, but both clubs can be very proud of strong seasons, finishing on the same amount of points, but Vikings having superior margin to finish first.

The Major Semi-Final bucked the trend of away teams winning as happened in both regular season encounters and saw Vikings claim victory by the biggest margin of the season. All three rinks were strong for Vikings on the day and will take confidence from the performance. Queanbeyan will be hoping their back end players work some magic, Darryl Peters and Paul Nicholl both looking to sustain their form following very good seasons.

Final Word: Vikings will be super confident after the Major Semi-Final win, but the two earlier results were 8 shots to QBC and 1 shot to Vikings. I expect the game to be played closer to that form line but will leave it to you to guess a winner!



Grade 4

Yass (2nd) v Weston Creek (1st)

Yass were the runners-up in 2022 and will be looking to atone for that performance and claim victory for the club after a superb season for the NSW club. Weston Creek have come into Grade 4 this season and much like their Grade 1 counterparts have been the benchmark.

Previous match-ups have been split 2/1 in favour of Yass, with Weston Creek far too strong at home in Round 3 before Yass turned the tables with a strong win in Round 8. Weston Creek were close, but not close enough in the Major Final to give Yass the points for now, but with neither side having played on the QRSL greens this year I'm willing to throw previous results out the window.

Final word: Two clubs who've both had great seasons. Weston Creek likely have the upside but Yass are just winning, getting all four grades entered in the Grand Final. Both sides have youth, both have experience, only one will be a Pennant Champion in 2023.

Grade 5

Goulburn Railway (2nd) v Bungendore (1st)

Runners up to Crookwell in 2022 Goulburn Railway have shown consistent form in Grade 5 and will be looking to go one better in 2023 but they will face a tough opponent in the 2022 Grade 6 winners Bungendore, who have been mighty coming into Grade 5 in 2023, finishing the season as comfortable minor premiers.

Bungendore have only really been tested by their Grand Final opponents in 2023, the club scoring prolifically against all opponents bar Goulburn. Bungendore claimed a one-shot win in Round 5 against Railway and then dropped the Major Semi-Final last weekend.

Bungendore certainly have the talent but Goulburn are not short in that area either with plenty of players making consistently valuable contributions.

Final Word: Adapting to the quick QRSL surface this weekend will be key, can Bungendore make the short trip to get a few extra sessions in this week to 'dial-in' or will the big game experience of the Goulburn Railway squad prove to canny??



Grade 6

Queanbeyan (1st) v Yass (2nd)

Let's not worry about major/minor/prelim finals!! The top six grades are all first v second and the top two teams here are again the Grand-Finalists.

Queanbeyan had a great season claiming seven wins before accounting for Yass in the Major Semi-Final, an excellent season from the club who will be looking to finish things with a flag. Yass had to come through the hard way following the semi final defeat and will be looking for an improved performance against the club they have found most difficult in 2023. Yass were victorious in Round 3 but have found it tough going since then, dropping two games straight to this weekends opponents in QBC. Queanbeyan had a wobble earlier in the season, losing three of four games between rounds five and eight, but arrested that skid against Yass in Round 9 and haven't lost since.

Final Word: Four wins in a row is the best Queanbeyan have done this season. Can they repeat that to take home the flag or will Yass spoil the party with three grades on the greens to support?

Grade 7

Goulburn Railway (1st) v Yass (4th)

Goulburn Railway have been the dominant club in Grade 7 in 2023 and will look to round out an imposing season with a Grade 7 pennant flag. The club has had only one hiccup along the way, a ten shot defeat to Crookwell in Round 7, but made up for that by accounting for their Southern Highlands rivals with a dominant Semi-Final performance to make the Grand Final. Yass had to go the hard way, a player eligibility issue costing a spot in the Major Semi-Final, but the club, as it has done all year, accepted the decision with grace and got on with playing quality bowls, taking out Vikings in the Minor-Semi before accounting for Crookwell in the Preliminary Final. Both clubs will have the belief that they can win this one and Yass remarkably having four sides competing this weekend is surely going to give all players a lift!

Final Word: I said about Grade 6 in the [season preview](#) to 'expect the unexpected in this grade in 2023' and of Grade 7 'everything said [about Grade 6] can be doubly true in Grade 7!' Can we see an outcome which is doubly unexpected?? Who knows which way this will go, but I'm expecting plenty of lead changes and a close finish.

Best wishes and great bowls!!

