

Piketh/Neal tilt for gold; bronze for triples

By Alan Simmonds, Media Officer, Bowls South Africa

Glorious stuff in Wales. Defending champions Proteas Colleen Piketh and Nici Neal will meet Guernsey's and Lucy Beere and Rose Ogier in today's women's pairs gold medal match at the Atlantic Championships in Cardiff, Wales.

The SA pair outgunned Sara Marie Nicholls and Ysie White from Wales 20-5 in the semi-finals at Barry; while in the corresponding eliminator, the Guernsey gals stole a march on hot favourites Rebecca Wigfield and Natalie Chestney from England

Earlier, the Protea duo edged Scotland a nail-biting 13-12 in a quarter-final eliminator.

At HQ, Penylan today defending champion Jamie Walker (England) and Darren Burnett (Scotland) clash for the men's singles crown - a replay of the men's final at the last Atlantic Championships in 2015 at the Athena Beach Resort, Cyprus.

Week two also saw the world's top women setting course in their pursuit of pairs and triples gold with a game style that is infinitely more tranquil than the guys, but equally entertaining and fierce.

At Penylan four gold medals will be decided between many of the greatest bowlers on the planet – there's no prizemoney here, but you couldn't buy a medal for love or a wad of cash.

It's the culmination of the event's second tough week – over the past six days the championships – featuring 25 countries from the European, African and South American theatres at four host clubs around the Welsh capital – Barry Athletic, Dinas Powys, Penarth Windsor and Penylan – has put the best-credentialed field ever through its paces in an enduro to test the skills and mental toughness of the game's top exponents.

Walker played his way into the main event by dodging a few bullets and staging a few heroic comebacks during qualifying. But he was too steady for young local Don Salmon and capitalised on a couple of loose ends from the Welsh star.

Burnett was his usual business-like self when he raced to victory against promising Irish 19-year-old Adam McKeown in the semi-finals; earlier Burnett demonstrated why the Ireland hierarchy gifted him the coveted singles berth when he eliminated a gallant South Africa's Pierre Breitenbach in their elimination match. Breitenbach played excellently and went down only 21-19 in a hard-fought game.

Jersey, the men's defending champions, give the mighty Scots a shot at the title they have held since Cyprus. The Jersey boys Derek Boswell, Greg Davis, Scott Ruderham and Malcolm De Sousa were brave beyond belief as they carded identical 12-8 wins over South Africa (Billy Radloff, Jason Evans, Prince Neluonde, Wayne Ritmuller) and Wales to gain their berth in the 15-end final.

The South Africans bow out after showing great verve and skill throughout.

However, the reigning Commonwealth Games fours champions Ronnie Duncan, Derek Oliver, Paul Foster and Alex Marshall are a professional outfit who will make their opponents earn every single shot.

Two comfortable semi-final wins saw England and Scotland power into the women's triples gold medal play-off. Bronze medallists South Africa's Anneke Snyman, Esme Kruger, Jacqui Janse van Rensburg fought hard to the end, but were too far behind to make progress.

The showdown featuring England's Jamie-Lea Winch, Lorraine Kuhler and Sian Honnor against Hannah Smith, Claire Johnston and Caroline Brown from Scotland will be a crowd-pleasing affair.

Information kindly supplied by international bowls journalist David Allen

Results:

Men's singles:

Elimination finals: WAL (Dan Salmon) bt MLT (Brendan Aquilina) 21-17, IRE (Adam McKeown) **bt RSA (Pierre Breitenbach) 21-19.**

Semi-finals: ENG (Jamie Walker) bt WAL (Dan Salmon) 21-17, SCO (Darren Burnett) bt IRE (Adam McKeown) 21-9.

Men's fours:

Elimination finals: IRE (Aaron Tennant, Neil Mulholland, Andrew Kyle, Mark Wilson) bt NAM (John Fouche, Piet Appolis, Johan Jacobs, Will Esterhuizen) 13-11, JER (Derek Boswell, Greg Davis, Scott Ruderham, Malcolm De Sousa) bt **RSA (Prince Neluonde, Wayne Rittmuller, Jason Evans, Billy Radloff, skip) 12-8.**

Semi-finals: JER (Derek Boswell, Greg Davis, Scott Ruderham, Malcolm De Sousa) bt WAL (Ben Thomas, Ross Owen, Stephen Harris, Jon Tomlinson) 12-8, SCO (Ronnie Duncan, Derek Oliver, Paul Foster, Alex Marshall) bt IRE (Aaron Tennant, Neil Mulholland, Andrew Kyle, Mark Wilson) 20-10.

Women's pairs:

Elimination finals: RSA (Nici Neal, Colleen Piketh, skip) bt SCO (Megan Grantham, Stacey McDougall) 13-12, GUE (Rose Ogier, Lucy Beere) bt IRE (Gemma McClean, Sarah-Jane Curran) 26-9.

Semi-finals: RSA (Nici Neal, Colleen Piketh) bt WAL (Sara Marie Nicholls, Ysie White) 20-5, GUE (Rose Ogier, Lucy Beere) bt ENG (Rebecca Wigfield, Natalie Chestney) 19-16.

Women's triples:

Elimination finals: IRE (Ashleigh Rainey, Courtney Wright Shauna O'Neill) bt NED (Elly Dolieslager, Betty Schiltman, Saskia Schaft) 17-9, ENG (Jamie-Lea Winch, Lorraine Kuhler, Sian Honnor) bt WAL (Melanie Thomas, Bethan Russ, Anwen Butten) 17-12.

Semi-finals: ENG (Jamie-Lea Winch, Lorraine Kuhler, Sian Honnor) **bt RSA (Jacqui Van Rensburg, Esmé Kruger, Anneke Snyman, skip) 20-9, SCO (Hannah Smith, Claire Johnston, Caroline Brown) bt IRE (Ashleigh Rainey, Courtney Wright Shauna O'Neill) 20-10.**