

UNA WICKHAM

Full name: Una Katherine Wickham

Born: 12 January 1923, Tauranga, New Zealand

Profession: P E Teacher in her early career; for the remainder, general teaching at Intermediate level

Una was a talented athlete who represented New Zealand in cricket and golf.

She played two tests for the NZ Women's Cricket Team in the summers of 1947/48 and 1948/49. Her highest batting score was 34, and her best bowling figures – 2 wickets for 33 runs.

As and when Una decided to concentrate on golf, she soon showed a keen analytical mind, strong hitting and an aggressive temperament. She won the Tauranga Golf Club Senior Women's Club championships a remarkable 16 times; 7 years in a row between 1954 and 1960, and on 9 other occasions between 1965 and 1980.

Una represented Bay of Plenty Golf every year between 1954 and 1968, and again between 1970 and 1975 during which time the Thames Valley – Bay of Plenty team won the Russell Grace Women's Interprovincial Cup six times.

She won the inaugural Bay of Plenty Sportsperson of the year Supreme Award in 1969.

She won the NZ Women's Amateur Match-play Championship in 1959 and 1969, and the Strokeplay Championship in 1968. She also teamed with a young Noel Johnson to win the inaugural NZ Mixed Foursomes title in 1973.

Una represented NZ on 8 occasions between 1953 and 1963.

In 1967, Una donated a trophy to Women's Golf Tauranga for the Best Gross Score of the year. The mounted medal was given to her for playing in her first Commonwealth Tournament at Melbourne, Australia in 1963.

She was a Club Committee Member from 1955 to 1957; Saturday Supervisor from 1966 to 1969, and an LGU Executive Member from 1975 to 1983.

Una died of Leukaemia at Tauranga on 20 June 1983, having only been diagnosed five days prior. She was 60 years old.

Many will recall the Una Wickham 72 Hole Match-play tournament which was played at the Tauranga Golf Course from 1984 to 2005. The tournament was originally held in pre-season February and attracted many top players. For most of its years, it was used as a trial for Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Auckland aspirants for Interprovincial selection. The tournament ceased when the Interprovincial dates were changed to November and alternative dates unable to be found.

Source: Bay of Plenty Times – June 1983

In between golf championships, Una was often embroiled with the Council of the Ladies Golf Union over her non-selection for national teams -she was particularly incensed when Rotorua's young player, Jane Butler, was preferred for the Espirito Santo World Teams' tournament - and as often as not, over the selection or non-selection of other leading players. Having a mind of her own, and an unusual capacity for speaking it, Una's relationships with high authority were often tense.

However, no-one could ever question her love of golf or her willingness to do anything and everything possible to assist the game. There was general satisfaction therefore when Una was eventually elected to the Council of the LGU .

However, stupefaction followed. Despite her playing record at provincial and national level, the fact that she ranked among the most feared of opponents, and her appearance in no fewer than eight national teams, Una was consistently spurned when she stood for the national selection committee.

Furthermore, evidence of her enthusiasm shone through when Una travelled to Christchurch at her own expense for the recent national trials at Russley.

As her career in golf lengthened, it came to be understood that her brusque manner was only a partial concealment of deep-seated shyness and that her bark was very much worse than her bite.

She was devoted to golf and the players. Perhaps her greatest joy was to choose and lead the Bay of Plenty – Thames Valley team which a few weeks ago won the annual Russell Grace Interprovincial Team's tournament for the third year in a row. However death has robbed Una of her ultimate distinction. She had been appointed Captain of the New Zealand team selected to play in the Tasman Cup.

Nothing would have pleased so eager a competitor as the chance to beat Australia with a team as spiritedly unified and proud as the Bay of Plenty team Una had led with so much enthusiasm and tactical planning.