



Beginner to Champion: Simon Leon, a Bowler on the Rise

by [Kalon Huett \(BV Contributor\)](#)

On Sunday 14 April 2019, Simon Leon will represent Murrumbeena Park Bowls Club at the rescheduled Final of the [State Novice Singles Championship](#) at Mulgrave Country Club following a remarkable rise from beginner to champion over the past 12 months.

Although the 34-year-old family man born and bred in Melbourne has played a variety of sports throughout his life, not even Leon himself could have predicted such a rapid development and almost instant success in the game he now loves.

“Exactly 12 months ago I entered a Corporate Cup bowls tournament hosted at Murrumbeena Park Bowls Club, which consisted of beginners who had never bowled before,” Simon explains. “I was instantly hooked. After four weeks of competition my team won the tournament, and after the final the paperwork was waiting for me and I immediately signed up to the club!”

And what an amazing introduction to the sport he’s experienced. “It’s been a whirlwind adventure to say the least. The members of Murrumbeena Park welcomed me to the club

with open arms. I began to practise weekly throughout the winter months under the guidance of some of the very best bowlers at the club,” he says.

Simon even spent three weeks in August holidaying on the Sunshine Coast and working on his craft every single day at Maroochydore Bowls Club. By Round 1 of the Pennant season, he was selected as a lead in Murrumbeena Park Bowls Club’s top side in Division 2 – a spot he has proudly held ever since.

“The club encouraged me to enter the Sandbelt Novice Championships, and fortunately I registered on the event’s closing date. Winning the Sandbelt region was made extra special with 20-30 members of my club in attendance to cheer me on at the final,” he says. “Since that time I have also won the Murrumbeena Cup, which is a time-honoured annual singles tournament for members of our club.”

A game of passion

Simon is a business acquaintance of Barrie Lester, a State and National Player for Victoria and Australia, and Barrie has had a strong influence on his fledgling bowls career. “I really admire Baz’s love for the game. He was incredibly passionate about the [Bowls Australia Disaster Relief Fund](#) and he cares greatly about the people in the wider bowls community,” says Simon.

So what is it about bowls that first attracted Simon and held his interest so keenly? “Initially I found bowls to be a game that my body could recover from after 25 years of competitive contact sport. Bowls also has the perfect balance between competitiveness and etiquette, as well as the options of both team and individual categories,” he says.

“The main reason I enjoy bowls today is my club and its people. The connection with the other members at Murrumbeena Park is as special as anything I’ve ever experienced before. From the moment I set foot in the door, every single person has made me welcome. The camaraderie and friendship at the club is infectious and immediately drew me in.”

As far as Simon is concerned, bowls can definitely be a young person’s sport. “I’ve played in numerous football and basketball premierships over the years,” he says. “Surprisingly, the camaraderie and intensity of a Saturday pennant game of bowls is equivalent to, if not greater, than any other sport. The earlier you begin, the more time you have to play the game. Easy decision!”

Super support

Simon was understandably proud to beat a quality field in the Novice Singles Championships after just six months in the sport, but mostly he was excited about what the achievement meant for his club. “Hopefully my success will encourage other new bowlers to join Murrumbeena Park, and receive the best bowls coaching that money can’t buy,” he says.

Simon admits he could not have achieved so much, so quickly without the wonderful support of his family. “I am very lucky to have a wife who has supported me in everything that I do for a very long time. As tough as it has been on her not having me around

sometimes this season, especially with our new baby boy, she has been sitting right behind the green for each one of my wins. For that I am very grateful.”

In a few short months, Simon Leon will be bowling for glory at the 2019 State Novice Singles Championship Final. Whatever happens, his bowls journey so far is certainly one to admire.