

It's on for young and old

Young gateball teams blow away image of an old folks' sport at championships

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GATEBALL: The concept of gateball, a sport in the croquet family, being an old person's sport was blown away at the weekend with two young teams making the final.

The National Championship for 2009 was held at the picturesque Rockhampton Croquet Club with 15 teams, including one from Japan, making the journey.

The brightly coloured tents added to the atmosphere along with the teams' coloured uniforms and, of course, the natural setting of the Botanic Gardens.

The scene was set for battle and the players were up to the task, playing up to seven group matches as they attempted to qualify for a place in the semi-finals.

Rockhampton had two teams in the competition and both performed reasonably well.

The Herons team was expected to put in a good show, and it did, finishing fourth of eight teams and just failing to take third position from the Queensland team, both completing the round-robin section with three wins.

In the other section the Magpies managed two wins in a group that contained both Canberra and Wombats of Victoria, the eventual finalists.

In the semi-finals Canberra got past the Japanese side by 12-9 while the Wombats made it through to the final by downing Kew, a Victorian team, by 16-11.

The final was everything you would wish for the major game of a



CONCENTRATION: Canberra's Daniel Casey plays his shot and studies the result in the National Gateball semi-final match against Japan on Sunday.

PHOTO: CHRIS ISON
C118/1009/11

national competition, with a big crowd present and the tension you get when two evenly matched teams lock horns.

In the end it was the blue-shirted Canberra team that prevailed over the vivid pinks of

Brunswick (Wombats), but only just.

In a thriller the Australian Capital Territory team won by 12-10.

Chair of the local organising committee Ethel Hughes said it was a fitting climax to a great weekend of com-

petition.

"It was very successful, very satisfying," she said.

The bushfires failed to upset competitors. "We had ash coming down on us," she said.

A composite team set up for the event won

two of its matches despite only coming together for the weekend.

The next major competition on the gateball program is the Inter-Regional Championship early in the new year.



GETTING READY: Japan player Kennzi Nosaka prepares to play his shot.

PHOTO: CHRIS ISON
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JUST THERE: Canberra captain Glen Whitehead shows where he wants a shot played.

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