

Hadar and Grencel crowned Masters

By Norman Spiro

Ra'anana's Zvika Hadar and Haifa's Irit Grencel won the annual prestigious men's and women's events, respectively, at the Masters tournament at the Ra'anana lawn bowls club last weekend. Israel's top 12 players, who qualified with ranking points accumulated in national competitions played throughout the year, participated in the tournament.

Hadar faced off against club mate Raymond Sher in a contest of rank determination by both players - Sher striving to repeat his last year's success, in addition to his win in 2003, while for Hadar it was a first-time attempt to prove that four previous successive bronzes must eventually equal one gold.

In a head-to-head exchange, the game was level at 8-all after nine ends, the two players matching each other in accurate drawing to the jack and in aggressive drives to the head.

Hadar went ahead 12-8, but Sher then closed the gap to 12-11 at the 14th.

From this point on, it was Hadar who

stood fast, competently countering Sher's skillful attempts, and surging ahead for a 21-12 win, following preliminary wins against internationals George Kaminsky and Arie Ben-Dor, and also against the recently crowned Israel's singles champion, Allan Saitowitz.

The bronze medals went to Boaz Marcus and Colin Silberstein.

Israel's national women's champion, Ruthie Gilor, was notably absent from the women's final after she was knocked out in the final preliminary round by Grencel, who along with Savyon's Yael Bar-Ner, will join Gilor at the upcoming world championships in New Zealand. Bar-Ner lost in an earlier game. For Gilor, last year's Masters winner, was denied the chance to match the late Miriam Jankelowitz's of three successive wins, and five titles in total.

In the final playoff, Grencel faced Ra'anana's rising star, Beverley Polatinsky, who had come through unbeaten in her five preliminary round games. It was Grencel's third appearance in the final, having won the title



Courtesy photo

Irit Grencel, left, and Zvika Hadar, at Ra'anana last weekend.

in 2004 and runner-up in 2001, while it was Polatinsky's first attempt at the title.

Their final clash provided top quality bowling, both players showing class with skillful, accurate drawing to the jack and with precision weighted bowls for delicate trailing of the jack away from an opponent's touching bowl.

Settling in sooner, the more experienced Grencel took an early 16-9 lead after 16 ends, and could have settled the issue, when holding four shots in the next end, only for Polatinsky to draw her last bowl for the critical save, and keep the game alive. An in-

spired Polatinsky then won four successive ends to draw level at 16-all at the 22nd end.

Two ends later, Polatinsky went ahead for the first time to lead 18-17, but in the penultimate 27th end, it was once again Grencel ahead at 20-19.

In the final 28th end, Polatinsky drew her first bowl two inches off the jack, only for Grencel to play the perfect toucher onto the jack for the game-winning shot, which Polatinsky's valiant attempt on the last bowl failed to counter - an exciting down-to-the-wire 21-19 win for Grencel's second title. Bronze medals went to Tami Kamzel and Bar-Ner.