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The Cowbell Competition – an annual sports event in all the clubs, with the final held at the Society AGM

When Swissair was still a rich airline, in the late 70s, the Swiss-air representative in New Zealand donated a cowbell to the Swiss community, or more precisely to the Swiss Society. The big, heavy, beautiful cowbell was meant to be a trophy to be competed for by all the affiliated regional Swiss Clubs. Members who don't belong to a regional Swiss Club but are individual members of the Swiss Society can compete, at no extra cost, with any club.

The disciplines in which the clubs have to compete are shot put (Steinstossen), ninepin bowling* (Kegeln), small bore target shooting (Schiessen) and cards (Jassen) – typical Swiss sports, though you might wonder whether cards is a real sport. Shooting is definitely considered a sport in Switzerland, even with a rifle, instead of Wilhelm Tell's crossbow.

According to the rules, shooting doesn't have to be done at the semi-finals nor at the final. The rules state that the total score of each club's four top shooters from the medal competition is to be used. Well, I suppose rules aren't set in concrete, and if both parties are happy to go shooting, why shouldn't they – let's be flexible. Maybe we could even discuss new disciplines one day. I'd be better at knitting than at shot put, for example.

As there are only four affiliated clubs at the moment, the competition starts with the semi-finals: Hamilton meets Auckland, and Taranaki meets Wellington, and the winners in the semi-finals will compete against each other in the final, on Queen's Birthday Weekend and take home the coveted cowbell. What I like about it: It is quite honourable to lose a semi-final, much more honourable than to be eliminated

in the first round... This year the final is between Taranaki and Hamilton, on Sunday morning of Queen's Birthday Weekend, in Wellington.

Is it old fashioned to have a competition amongst the regional clubs? Are the disciplines out-dated? Are the competition and the disciplines sacrosanct traditions? Could the competition be modernised and still be

traditional? Are we happy with the status 'as is'? Whatever you think about it, don't be afraid to voice your opinion; to have a say and speak up is even more of a Swiss tradition than a cowbell.

*As Wellington doesn't have a Swiss style ninepin bowling alley, bowling in Wellington is done in a tenpin bowling alley.

Inde

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