

2003 Beach Review by Barbara Elliot

EVA Beach Commissioner **Elliot Crowe** describes the final 2003 Grand Prix Event at Barry Island, "The hottest weekend on record saw some of the hottest beach volleyball of the summer, as Barry Island hosted the climax of the season's Grand Prix. Those lucky enough to play on the centre court had the luxury of a regular hosing down of the sand, organised by Tournament Director **Carl Harwood**." This was in contrast to Weymouth's wet Saturday (see DBH report opposite page) causing **Donna Sedgwick** to declare "You know when your career is finished when you go shopping." She and **Jo Bonner** admitted that instead of sitting courtside when not playing they retreated to the shops to get out of the rain!

The women's final at Barry would decide the overall 2003 Grand Prix Women's title which is based on accumulative points from Grand Prix events over the summer. Elliot describes the match, "...tour leaders **Audrey Cooper** and **Maria Bertelli** met reigning champions **Hedda Meijer** and **Debbie Spokes**. The Barry Island crowd were in for a treat, as with three defensive specialists on court there were plenty of spectacular rallies. *The contrast in styles was clear, with the vocal Cooper and Bertelli chasing every ball down, while Meijer and Spokes played the classical attacker/defender game with quiet efficiency.* The former took the first set, hustling and chasing down every point, while the latter pulled the scores level in the second, with Hedda Meijer using the second ball attack to good effect. The final set was nip and tuck, with

awesome rallies and never more than two points between the teams. *Cooper and Bertelli finally edged it 16:14, winning the 2003 crown in style.*" (see back page)

Hedda Meijer and Debbie Spokes lost to Audrey and Maria at the Sandbanks Grand Prix but took revenge at Weymouth. They won all five events at Boumemouth and Boscombe including the three Invitation events. Describing this as 'Debbie and Hedda's glam slam' Boumemouth Beach Volleyball Club's (BBVC) **Richard Cannon** reports from their Boscombe Open final, "At one stage locals **Nicky Tinsley** and **Julia Stevens** looked like upstaging the number one seeds by taking the first set. With Nicky serving well and Julia attacking at every opportunity the local girls finally seemed to work out how to beat their arch rivals Hedda and Debbie. However as the game went on the number one seeds began to dominate and the local girls just seemed to run out of steam. Hedda and Debbie just kept piling on the pressure taking a close second set and steam rolling the third to win 2:1." These two teams met at several crucial matches across the beach season which Hedda and Debbie won. Hedda took two months unpaid leave from her research job in Nottingham to train regularly with Debbie in Poole. They were placed second in the 2003 Beach Grand Prix and Nicky and Julia took the third spot.

International players **Denise Austin** and **Mel Coutts**, winners at Weymouth, competed together in the European Beach Championships in Crete. Denise's beach partner, **Mo**



Storm clouds threaten as Debbie Spokes defends watched by partner Hedda Meijer
photograph - BM Tattersell