

New Paltz, Oklahoma Wesleyan Take Collegiates

The 2011 Collegiate National Championships were filled with surprises. The first, and most unpleasant, was the absolutely hideous weather. Spring in Philadelphia can be chancy, but this was ridiculous. After lunch it was 47 degrees, driving rain and wind gusts of 35 MPH. The Merion Interclub, which is played concurrently with the Collegiates, stopped play. But the ninety players in the Collegiates were determined to play on. With every round of play, they were offered the opportunity to stop, but each time they elected to continue until all 106 games scheduled for the day had been played and the knock out ladder for Sunday decided.

In addition to the most players ever, the most schools ever contested this year's event. Players competed as doubles teams in either Golf Croquet or Six Wicket croquet. Each team played five matches on Saturday to determine the ladders for Sunday. In Six Wicket, all of the eight teams in the ladder were from either St. John's College or SUNY New Paltz. In Golf Croquet, all of the teams competing in Golf Croquet made the ladder field of sixteen.

In the Six Wicket division, the semi finals pitted the number one team from New Paltz against their own number two; the other semi final comprised St. John's number one and two, thus guaranteeing no repeat of one team competing against itself for the championship. Ironically, the number two team from each school won its semi final match. The New Paltz number one, Justin Berbig and Dave Cohen, defeated the St. John's number one, Blake Myers and Tex Pasley, for third place. In the final, the New Paltz number two, Francis Palasieski and Tim Mullen charged to an early and commanding lead against the St. John's team of Stephen Monteiro and Linus Feder. Feder ran a near perfect break to the peg but it was not enough. For the first time in eight years, there was a new Collegiate Six Wicket Champion -- The State University of New York at New Paltz. Four years ago the Extreme Croquet players from New Paltz read each other the USCA Six Wicket rule book on the drive to Merion -- they then proceeded to play their first six wicket croquet, ever. In four years, they have grown into a formidable presence in the Collegiate world, and in croquet tournaments across the country. Their team is now so large that they had to be restricted to 24 players in this year's event. St. John's College had an amazing run of seven straight championships and they vow to return the trophy to Annapolis next year.

Events were equally interesting in the Golf Croquet Division. The perennial threats in this division have been Navy, William and Mary and Davidson. Once again, a new team came on the scene. Oklahoma Wesleyan came to their first Collegiate Championship three years ago and did not make the ladder with even one team. With a lot of hard work, all of their teams made the ladder this year and two of them competed in the semi finals. Steve Luttenberg and Skyler Wittman met Jay Schneider and Reid McBride of William and Mary in one semi with Micah Klumb and Daniel Johnston meeting Ross Hermann of Navy in the other. Ross had the unusual experience of playing both balls, which is allowed under the Collegiate Rules; when a school has an uneven number of players, one person from the team is allowed to play both balls in order to allow everyone a chance to play. This year four people played both balls, two in Golf and two in Six Wicket. Only Ross had great success. He won his semi while Luttenberg and Wittman knocked out favorites from William and Mary. Klumb and Johnston prevailed over Schneider and McBride to take third place in the ladder. In a well played final Ross Hermann defeated Steve Luttenberg and

Skyler Wittman to take first place in the ladder. However, Oklahoma Wesleyan's outstanding record of placing all their teams on the ladder and taking second and third in the ladder gave the Golf Croquet Championship to Oklahoma Wesleyan College. A team that couldn't even place one team in the ladder three years ago took the whole thing and another great victory for both their school and for collegiate croquet.

Once again, great thanks and kudos must go to the Merion Cricket Club for its generous support of Collegiate Croquet. As they have done for the past six years, they hosted the tournament and dedicated ten lawns to the Collegiate Championship. Merion deserves much of the credit for the success of the Collegiate Program and for the increasing numbers of young people playing in USCA sanctioned tournaments . They are amazing.

Great credit also goes to Dan Maguire who hosts the entire group for a pizza party at his home. Anne Morris once again was everywhere, lending a hand where needed. The hero of the day among volunteers, however, must go to Charlie Gillmarten who gave up his weekend to help referee. He is the only one who was on the court the entire day through the cold and rain. He even offered to come back next year!

Results

Six Wicket:

1. State University of New York at New Paltz
2. St. John's College
3. United States Naval Academy

Golf Croquet:

1. Oklahoma Wesleyan University
2. United States Naval Academy
3. State University of New York at New Paltz

Six Wicket Ladder:

Francis Palasieski and Tim Mullen, SUNY New Paltz

Golf Ladder:

Ross Hermann, United States Naval Academy