

## **2011 IPC GOLF CROQUET CHALLENGE**

**Wellington, Florida**

**April 22-24, 2011**

After just over a month from its very successful Invitational, The International Polo Club - Palm Beach was once again in the headlines with yet another high-purse Golf Croquet Tournament. Part of a multi-sport weekend celebration, one including rugby, cricket, field hockey tennis and, of course, polo, the impressive venue drew large crowds and offered another great opportunity to throw some of the spotlight upon croquet. The entire weekend was festive and the mood of those playing within the croquet tournament was spirited throughout.

While IPC has but one lawn, it is a beauty. Limited to six participants, by invitation only, a purse of six-thousand dollars was up for grabs, and with two thirds of the field walking away with cash in their pockets, what one would think might be a pressure packed few days was actually casual in nature.

Due to time constraints, the action began Friday with an occluded seeding block, each player facing off against only four of his competitors. Names were drawn from a hat, and in an ironic twist, the two Finalists never did face one another until the last day. Matches were of the 13-point version, Egyptian balls were used and the hoops were set at near contact. While everyone was to make the Playoffs, the two byes were guaranteed a spot in the money.

Of course, as the players were becoming used to the lawns, the balls and the 'super hoops' in use, some upsets and surprises did occur within the seeding block. Ben Rothman went undefeated. David Bent, who looks most comfortable playing Golf Croquet, let down in his last game but knew that his 3-1 record was good enough for the second bye. David McCoy, the promoter and self proclaimed long-shot, actually found himself seeded third going into the Playoffs. Brian Cumming, far from a Golf Croquet expert, had problems of his own, the heads of his trustworthy mallet suddenly becoming looser with each shot - the swing was good, but when a sixty yard attempt occasionally goes but thirty, well...you get the idea. Chris Patmore and Golf Croquet veteran Sherif Abdelwahab both looked rusty and unpredictable.

Once again, since everyone made the now best-of-three Playoffs, whatever occurred Friday was suddenly old news as the real action began. In perhaps the best Playoff match of the day, hard-hitting Abdelwahab regained some of his classic form while the underestimated McCoy lost just a bit of consistency. Abdelwahab won the match in two games (7-6, 7-6), but one shot here or there could have created a far different outcome. In the other Quarter-Final match, Chris Patmore also regained his form. His opponent, Brian Cumming, was a basket case. Alright, perhaps not a basket case, but his mallet should have probably been resting within one. He hit it, cursed at it and pled with it, all to no avail as Patmore cruised about with a 7-3, 7-1 victory. The interesting fact is that Cumming, using an extremely unique mallet, felt that any other weapon would prove even worse results.

With the bigger money on the horizon, the two Semi-Final matches were both well fought and played. Rothman would overcome the improving Patmore (7-5, 7-6) while the steady Bent would out-duel a more controlled Abdelwahab with a 7-5, 7-4 score. Both matches were fantastic to watch, the IPC visitors amazed not only at the consistency, but the combination of power and touch exhibited by all four players.

Sunday morning brought the somewhat expected Finals between Rothman and Bent. On the sidelines, those players eliminated had much to look forward to and much to discuss. One topic, in particular, revolved about the use of the Egyptian balls. Generally speaking, these balls are harder in makeup, thus allowing it easier to make bad-angle hoops and harder to jump or jaws a shot. While this was either a positive or a negative, dependant upon your tactics and point of view, the fact that the black ball was significantly larger drove much of the discussions. Winning a coin toss in Golf Croquet means that you must play blue and black, and how to lose a coin toss was a topic seldom discussed in the past. Two sets of balls were available, but the same problem occurred within both. Brian Cumming was more than happy to mumble about how these harder balls, combined with the firmer 'super hoops', had caused havoc with his mallet. Much of the conversation dwindled as the expected reggae music, played throughout the nearby cricket match, made words hard to comprehend.

Bent started off the first game of the Finals with flare, taking a quick 3-0 lead. Rothman then responded, with three of his own. Hoops went back and forth, and with the score eventually tied 6-6, Bent made the gravis error of being short while approaching the tie breaking wicket. And in a game where both players hit almost everything they shot at, long dangerous hoops in particular, one missed roquet, the stalking process stymied a bit by a nearby fence, gave Ben game number one.

Game two started much the same, Bent now capturing a 5-1 lead. Still, unfazed, Rothman fought back, and at hoop number eight, disaster struck for Bent. After missing a somewhat easy hoop shot and after a nice jump-shot by Rothman, Bent was not only stuck within the irons, but managed to hit nothing but wicket while trying to move his ball forward. Rothman capitalized by scoring the next three without resistance, thus drawing the game even. Still, perhaps more mad at himself than thinking clearly, Bent drilled hoops 11 and 12 from long distances to capture game two.

Tied now, with some amazing shooting exemplified by both players, the sidelined participants offered bets (between Reggae beats) only to find no takers. This had become, in retrospect, the only Playoff match to go to three games. As it turns out, the final game was a letdown. Rothman played well, and though one would think Bent would be reenergized after the game two victory, he suddenly looked tired, missing the shots that had previously worked so well for him. Rothman won 7-2 and with yet another of the many fist-pumps, turned his thoughts toward spending the nice check he was about to receive.

Overall, some extraordinary play was witnessed throughout the two and a half days. More so, even with cash as an incentive, the honor and respect that the players exhibited as to how and why any form of croquet should be played was extraordinary. David McCoy, a Member of the IPC and the event's organizer, worked tirelessly to fit croquet within the overall theme of this wonderful weekend. Paul Hope, tennis professional and overall athletic-event coordinator, was amazed at the degree of ease and professionalism exhibited throughout. Fed, housed and entertained well, and whether the players came out ahead or behind, the weekend was one to remember. Everyone thanks the International Polo Club - Palm Beach for hosting such a wonderful event and hopes that there are many more in the future.

### **BLOCK RECORDS**

4-0 Ben Rothman  
3-1 David Bent  
2-2 David McCoy

2-2 Brian Cumming  
1-3 Chris Patmore  
0-4 Sherif Abdelwahab

### **PLAYOFFS**

Chris Patmore defeated Brian Cumming 7-3, 7-1  
Sherif Abdelwahab defeated David McCoy 7-6, 7-6

Ben Rothman (bye) defeated Chris Patmore 7-5, 7-6  
David Bent (bye) defeated Sherif Abdelwahab 7-5, 7-4

Ben Rothman defeated David Bent 7-6, 5-7, 7-2

### **FINAL ORDER**

1. Ben Rothman \$3000
2. David Bent \$1500
3. Sherif Abdelwahab \$750
3. Chris Patmore \$750
5. Brian Cumming
5. David McCoy

-John C. Osborn (TD)