

Croquet At PGA National 2011 Club Championship

Tired of Carla Rueck's whining about holding a club championship the Board of Directors gave in to her and we held our "First in Recent Memory PGA National Sanctioned Club Championship" right here on our croquet lawns March 24-26. Twenty one players all members of Croquet at PGA National and the USGA competed in this three day singles event. The players were divided into four flights. With a wide range of players in each flight block play began on a sunny Thursday morning and continued on Friday with playoffs on Saturday morning

Our Championship flight was comprised of six players with handicaps ranging from Chuck Whitlows low of $\frac{1}{2}$ to Carl Sturges high of 2.5. Barry Gibson the official coach of all the high handicap players here at PGA National led the block play to face a surprised Carl Sturges in the semifinals. Paula Phaneuf, the only women in that flight came out of the blocks in second place after having had to face tough players such as of Chuck Whitlow and Gary Weltner. Paula went on to defeat Aaron Kurtzman in the playoffs to then face Barry Gibson in the finals. The final match between Barry and Paula was a joy to watch. What a lesson in what break play should be. Barry and Paula both showed us their superior skills with Barry prevailing by one wicket in overtime. Barry is now our 2011 Club Champion.

The six first flight player's handicaps ranged from a high of 9 to a low of 5. Which is a larger span then you would think. Betty Whitlow, a five, and this year's PGA Low Championship winner came on strong in block play winning all of her games. In surprise upset Joy Bradford defeated Betty in the playoffs by one wicket, in a hard fought battle that went into seven overtime rounds. Victoria Albrecht new to first flight play broke out of the blocks to face Margo Stinson, also a 5, in the semifinals. While Robin Sweet and Barbara Weltner cheered from the side lines, Margo prevailed to go on to face Joy in the finals. It was a beautiful game to watch with both players showing their break play skills. Joy worked hard but Margocaptured the 2011 First Flight Championship. Needless to say both Joy and Victoria have had major adjustments made to their handicaps as a result of their super play

The Second Flight with only four players with handicaps ranging from 10 to 12 had the toughest block. Everyone had to play three games each day in the blocks with all players going into the playoffs. Between the heat and the large number of matches it was almost impossible to predict who the winner would be. Especially when you consider that everyone had played each other twice before the finals. On the final day Monica started the day in first place defeating Anne Licursi. Harry Lloyd in second place had to work hard to defeat a much improved Penny Ferraro. The final match between Monica and Harry was long and hard fought with Harry taking the 2011 Second Flight Championship.

The third flight players most of which are new to any type of tournament play had a myriad of problems, health, work and family obligations which added an interesting twist to the flight. On Wednesday Joan Murphy's doctor forbade her to play and Missy Diack succumbed to Carla's begging to play two matches with Pat Lloyd and Rosemary

Faulconer Friday morning before she headed out to take care of her horse. In the end it was decided that both Mae and Rosemary had enough wins to face each other in the finals. It was a seesaw match with both players taking the lead then falling back. After several overtime rounds Mae Hamlin became this year's Third Flight Champion and Rosemary is the runner-up.

Carla Rueck the Tournament director wishes to thank John Osborn for all his advice and help in setting up the block schedules. Thankfully, Jim Taylor served as the Tournament referee and it was especially kind of John Phaneuf to get to the courts early each day to ensure that the wickets were set properly. At the conclusion of the matches everyone retired to the Members Club for a well-earned lunch. Trophies and certificates were awarded to the players at the Spring Fling.

Carla loved being Tournament Director and likened the job to being the Pope. You have final say in all matters of play while you stride around in white garments. Next year she plans to replace her ball cap with a miter. The tournament will now become an annual event open to all Croquet at PGA National Members. Remember to save the last weekend in March 2012 for the Second Annual PGA Club Championship.