

THE 43rd PALM BEACH CROQUET CLUB INVITATIONAL
NCC, West Palm Beach, Florida
January 17-22, 2011

One would imagine that over the course of six days of play, at least one small disagreement might erupt. Or that a weather disturbance would delay matches. Or that some other unforeseen disaster would alter the steady ebbs and flows which all croquet tournaments strive to achieve. During the 43rd annual Palm Beach Croquet Club Invitational, this image could not have been any further from reality.

It is a long time – six days. And yet these six days do have purpose, the most important one being to allow for double elimination Playoffs, thus guaranteeing a Champion who did not simply stumble into a pile of luck. For the 43 players involved, the long trip to the Finals was made easier in that there were only five rounds of play per day. Matches were timed at one hour and twenty minutes and the pace of play, though competitive throughout, was leisurely. Four Flights of Singles and three of Doubles equally divided the field.

As expected, the Singles favorites did fare well throughout. Carla Rueck (11) captured the Third Flight (Digby Bridges Trophy) honors with a 14-12 victory over Kevin Creegan (12). In the Second Flight (Harold Brown Trophy), collegiate Francis Palasieski (7) overcame classmate David Cohen (8) in a 26-11 whopping while yet another classmate, Justin Berbig (4.5) took the First Flight (President's Trophy) with his 17-14 triumph over Geoffrey Mattison (4.5). Must have been a very long drive back to New Paltz for David Cohen, just one sad and depressed loser sitting in the backseat behind two true stars. Johnny Mitchell (-1.5), who must have been seeing stars after a forgettable start to the event, rebounded to beat (18-16) hard-charging Mike Gibbons (-1.5) in the (Tankoos Trophy) Championship Flight, thus being one of many that day to now have their names engraved onto trophies so very rich with history.

As if to mirror this historical theme, which includes more than one story told in whispers, the Doubles competition made for some strange yet victorious bedfellows. In the Second Flight (Clayton Trophy) Waterford Doubles, top seeds Kevin Creegan – Warren Phillips snuck past (14-13) Randi Cudlitz – Kelso Sutton. OK, that makes sense. But in the First Flight (Lawford Trophy) Doubles, lightning struck when Cynn timer Cagney – Dean Hewitt spanked (13-8) the young Francis Palasieski – David “Please don't put me in the truck!” Cohen! In the Championship Flight (Supper Cup), the petite and nimble team of Dick Sullivan – Bass Winmill also saw a flash of light as they overcame Dick Brackett – Bill “Warren” Rouady (18-14) to capture the coveted Title.

Even for those failing to make the Singles Playoffs, both a Plate event and the well-stocked bar were available for those looking for extended stimulation. Plate winners, from Championship to the Third Flight consecutively, were Bob Chilton, Cynn timer Cagney, George Mathys and Randi Cudlitz. Most importantly of all though, as it has always been, was the presentation of the Ruthie Trophy, one set aside for the player showing an exemplary degree of sportsmanship. This year's award went to the beautiful Geraldine McCauley. The Flamboyance Trophy should have gone to Sandy Walsh (mostly though not completely due to her colorful wig changes), but since there is no such trophy, and since the winner would have been beyond obvious, such a ceremony never took place.

On the social side of the boundary line, breakfasts and lunches throughout were wonderful. As was the Opening Reception and the Toast & Tally. The Lobster 'Players Dinner' was absolutely fantastic, and festive, and unless you were a lobster, endless fun! The Final's Luncheon had phenomenal food, and perhaps if there was any flaw to be found within this event, it may have been locating the Bloody Mary/Mimosa station within five feet of the Tournament Director. Not that he was the only partaking in the bottomless pitchers of delight!

Needless to say, a great deal of planning and preparation goes into keeping up with the standards that this legendary Club and its Invitational have set. While the historic pictures presented upon the Trophy Table sent almost everyone down memory, the additional presence of the young up-and-comers provided all a great glimpse of both the future and the past. Archie Peck and Ruth Summers, a fine-tuned machine that always makes everything run so smoothly, combined with efforts from the hard working ground's crew and the fantastic Sandy James staff – perhaps this mixture had a great deal to do with the sense of relaxation felt throughout the event. Of course, the fact that this was one of the most honorable groups of croquet players ever assembled did more than anything else to make everything just perfect. The Palm Beach Croquet Club thanks everyone for both his or her assistance and attendance and looks forward to next year's celebration!

FINAL ORDER

CHAMPIONSHIP 'TANKOOS TROPHY' SINGLES

1. Johnny Mitchell
2. Mike Gibbons
3. Dick Brackett
4. Dick Sullivan
5. Jane Simonds
5. Neil Houghton
7. Bob Chilton
7. David McCoy
9. Ben Morehead
10. Ruth Summers

FIRST FLIGHT 'PRESIDENTS TROPHY' SINGLES

1. Justin Berbig
2. Geoffrey Mattison
3. Jodie Rugart
4. Jim Creegan
5. Bill Whitman
5. Sandy Walsh
7. Bass Winmill
7. Cynnie Cagney
9. Bill Rouady
9. Geraldine McCauley

SECOND FLIGHT 'CLAYTON TROPHY' SINGLES

1. Francis Palasieski

2. David Cohen
3. Jake Johnson
4. Betty Crisler
5. Dean Hewitt
5. Eileen Holberg
7. Fred Hilles
7. Lauren Hammond
9. Lou Fusz
10. George Mathys

THIRD FLIGHT 'DIGBY BRIDGES TROPHY' SINGLES

1. Carla Rueck
2. Kevin Creegan
3. Anne Licursi
4. Kelso Sutton
5. Randi Cudlitz
5. Sally McGrath
5. Warren Phillips
8. Sally Cushing

CHAMPIONSHIP 'SUPPER CUP' DOUBLES

1. Dick Sullivan-Bass Winmill
2. Dick Brackett-Bill Rouady
3. Bob Chilton-Bill Whitman
3. David McCoy-Sandy Walsh
5. Johnny Mitchell-Geoffrey Mattison
5. Neil Houghton-Jim Creegan
7. Jane Simonds-Jodie Rugart
8. Ben Morehead-Justin Berbig

FIRST FLIGHT 'LAWFORD TROPHY' DOUBLES

1. Cynnie Cagney-Dean Hewitt
2. Francis Palasieski-David Cohen
3. Lauren Hammond-Anthea Blamire
3. Beatty Cramer-Eileen Holberg
5. Betty Crisler-Sally Winmill
5. Jake Johnson-George Mathys
5. Lou Fusz-Dolph Cramer
8. Geraldine McCauley-Carla Rueck

SECOND FLIGHT 'HAROLD BROWN TROPHY' DOUBLES

1. Kevin Creegan
1. Warren Phillips
2. Kelso Sutton
2. Randi Cudlitz
3. Jane Osgood
3. Mary Anne Mathys
4. Sally McGrath
4. Susan Cushing

PLATE WINNERS

Championship: Bob Chilton
First Flight: Cynnie Cagney
Second Flight: George Mathys
Third Flight: Randi Cudlitz

RUTHIE AWARD (Sportsmanship)

Geraldine McCauley

-John C. Osborn (TD)