

## **2011 PGA PEYTON BALLENGER INVITATIONAL**

**February 8-12, 2011 – P.G.A. National and the N.C.C.**

How can you not stop? There they are, those adorable puppies and kittens, dancing and frolicking just behind the pet store window. They look so warm, and cuddly, and happy as they bounce off each other, taking well earned time-outs only to sip the water and relish the culinary delights sitting within the bowl just aside from the play area. Even asleep they look content, and you know they will soon awake vibrant, ready to embellish the next game, or challenge, or meal.

If you are still envious of such a life, you have not played at The Croquet Club at PGA National's Peyton Ballenger Invitational. Yes, a lot of words for a croquet tournament, but saying the name three times fast, I promise, will be the end of the stress test. Once at PGA National, the worries of the world dissipate. Five days of competitive croquet just scratch the surface, for from the Opening Diner/Reception straight through the Final's Luncheon, all of your solid or liquid dreams come true. Courtside lunches and dinners are held throughout, and even for the one evening in which the players are free to stray, the open evening bar, still available, sets the tone.

While the hard work, hospitality and intense volunteerism at PGA remains unquestioned, it must be said that the 23rd Peyton Ballenger Invitational did have some barriers to jump. Three days of rain, at some times well beyond a drizzle, may have dampened some of the spirit. Likewise, having recently lost a court and with the nearby Devonshire site unavailable for the year, much of the play was relocated over to the National Croquet Center, thus breaking up the family feeling this event so cherishes. On the good side, while puppies and kittens grow and need more space, by next year it is hoped that PGA will have added another court and, with some sod-relocation, will have the Devonshire back up to standards.

Overall the four courts available at PGA played better than ever, with great thanks to the PGA Management and grounds-crew. Matches were timed at one hour and twenty minutes, six rounds were played per day and double-banking was standard for all Singles. Of course, one of the great aspects of this tournament was that five Flights of Singles were played, thus guaranteeing great competition within each Division. Doubles was played under the Waterford Format and most matches came down to heroic last turns.

In the Championship Flight Singles, Johnny Mitchell (-2) barely survived multi-past Champion Ted (-1.5) Knopf (19-17) to claim top honors. John Warlick (2.5) defeated Guy Brown (4.5) in a First Flight Finals (16-10) involving two players both quickly sliding down the handicap scale - they have both been lowered since. Dolores Gallagher (5) won the Second Flight (18-12) over Jim Pagano (5) and Majai Pagano (8) did take home the family bacon (13-8) with a win over Victoria Albrecht (8) in the Third Flight. Joseph Zilligen (9) soured Robin Sweet's (10) day with his 16-10 victory in the Fourth Flight.

Once again, and croquet aside...what is truly wonderful about this event is the communal nature in which it is held, the celebratory outreach never becoming outweighed by the importance of a three-foot wicket shot. As an example, on Wednesday night almost everyone in the Club delivered homemade dinners for the now wet but happy players, competitive animals now warming within the glow of such hospitality. To add to the excitement, an unannounced Murder Mystery Theater troupe entertained the field throughout the evening. (Some still think Bob Chilton should have been arrested simply because, well, why not?)

Of course, the list of those to be thanked by the players goes without end, and while some worthy of note may now be mistakenly missing, let now the participants thank, for all of their hard work, Betty Whiltow, Pat Lloyd, Paula Phaneuf, Kate Gilden, Bob Young and Ray Swanson. Chairperson Missy Diack and Co-Chairperson Jim Taylor go without writing. Thanks also go out to Joy Bradford, Carol Difazio, Stephanie Hayes, Ann Licursi, Harry Lloyd, John

Phaneuf, Chuck Reif, Carla Rueck, Margo Stinson, Carol Teichman, Bob Yount, Monica Uhlhorn, Gary Weltner and, and how I hate to write this, Chuck Whitlow.

Several months ago the participants of this event were simply living beyond the window. And for a week in February they were taken out for walk, or adopted - a joining that The Croquet Club at PGA hopes will last for a lifetime. Weather or not, this was a fun adventure, and play at its best. Till next year, when we will name new Champions....

### **CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT SINGLES**

1. Johnny Mitchell
2. Ted Knopf
3. Blaine Davis
3. Ted Quimby
5. Barry Gibson
5. Bob Chilton
5. David Theiste
5. Don Heerens
9. David Ekstrom
9. Jim Taylor
9. Vic Lawrence
12. Bob Whitmore
12. Linda Huxtable
12. Ron Huxtable
15. Chuck Whitlow
16. Tom Hughes

### **FIRST FLIGHT SINGLES**

1. John Warlick
2. Guy Brown
3. Bill Grimsdale
3. Jerry Luecke
5. Bob Yount
6. Bill Whitman
6. Craig Smith
8. Betty Whitlow

### **SECOND FLIGHT SINGLES**

1. Dolores Gallagher
2. Jim Pagano
3. Ray Stoy
3. Sue Lawrence
5. Sheila Davis
6. Chuck Perry
6. Margo Stinson
6. Martie Ekstrom

### **THIRD FLIGHT SINGLES**

1. Mijia Pagano
2. Victoria Albrecht
3. Lauren Hammond
4. Beth Ann Theiste
4. Hope Harmon

6. Don Lancto
8. Jerry Devitt
8. Robert Lankford

#### **FOURTH FLIGHT SINGLES**

1. Joseph Zilligen
2. Robin Sweet
3. Anne Licursi
3. Monica Uhlhorn
5. Geraldine Lancto
5. Hedy Stoy
5. Penny Ferraro
8. Carla Rueck

#### **CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT DOUBLES**

1. Bill Grimsdale
2. Bob Chilton
3. Tom Hughes
4. Chuck Whitlow
5. David Ekstrom
6. Craig Smith
7. Jim Taylor/Vic Lawrence
8. Johnny Mitchell
9. Ron Huxtable
10. Bob Whitmore
11. John Warlick
12. Ted Knopf
13. Blaine Davis
14. David Theiste
15. Linda Huxtable
16. Barry Gibson

#### **FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES**

1. Guy Brown
2. Jim Pagano
3. Ray Stoy
4. Sheila Davis
5. Bill Whitman
6. Betty Whitlow
7. Sue Lawrence
8. Linda Prickett
9. Dolores Gallagher
10. Hope Harmon
11. Beth Ann Theiste
12. Jerry Devitt/Margo Stinson
13. Jerry Luecke
14. Martie Ekstrom
15. Chuck Perry
16. Lucille Maresca

#### **SECOND FLIGHT DOUBLES**

1. Lauren Hammond

2. Joseph Zilligen
3. Don Lancto
4. Robin Sweet
5. Mijai Pagano
6. Monica Uhlhorn
7. Carla Rueck
8. Penny Ferraro
9. Betty Crisler
10. Rosemary Falconer
11. Julia Wallace
12. Geraldine Lancto
13. Robert Lankford
14. Patricia Muir
15. Victoria Albrecht
16. Hedy Stoy

-John C. Osborn (TD)