

2012 Mission Hills Invitational

The popular desert club casually referred to as “croquet heaven” has had a busy season. With all three National Championship tournaments, the U.S. Open and the Desert Classic, and the upcoming Western Regionals, the Mission Hills Invitational stood out as the most relaxing tournament amongst these behemoths. A cozy crew of 20 assembled from as far away as Maine and Massachusetts to enjoy single-banked bliss throughout the American Rules contest.

The first flight had a wide range of players from established top seeds Judy Dahlstrom and Cindy Bagby (6 handicaps) to new players on the rise Cameron Evans (10) and Val Terry (12). Cindy and Judy came out slowly and suffered the upsets. Cameron Evans went undefeated through the block and Nick Gray (11) took the second seed. Nick beat his doubles partner (Bob Morford) and got to face Cameron in the semi-final while Judy rallied in the loser's bracket.

After losing all her block games to higher-handicapped players, Judy did her best phoenix impersonation and rose from the ashes winning three games in-a-row to make the final. But Cameron could not be stopped. After dispatching Nick 20-10, Cameron took an early lead and let Judy collect deadness. Judy went into desperation mode (where she thrives) but she could not pull the necessary break together and lost in game one of the double-elimination finals.

In doubles, the local duo of Nick Gray and Bob Morford showed that years of golfing together can set up a great team dynamic. Nick and Bob took out the favored couple Rich Schiller and Val Terry while Carl Myer and Cameron Evans beat Judy Dahlstrom and Toni Kemp. The finals was back and forth with neither team slowing towards the finish. While they had their chances, Bob and Nick could not get enough hoops in their last turns and lost 16-15 to the new partnership of Cameron and Carl.

Championship Doubles had a few new pairings with Tom Hughes and Steve Mossbrook as well as Peter Bach and Bob Van Tassell to mix it up

with the establishment. Last year's champs Ben Rothman and Larry Stettner came out hot and snagged the top spot in the playoffs while most teams tied at 2-2. Ron Hendry and Mike Orgill came out fourth and nearly upset Ben and Larry (15-14) while Jim Butts and Aviv Katz traded their #3 seed for a spot in the final by defeating Bob and Peter (16-10). The Croquet Guru and the Croquet Pro took down local legends Jim and Aviv in convincing fashion 26-7 to repeat their feat from last season.

Championship singles went predictably in the block with Ben Rothman and Jim Butts taking the top seeds. With little time to adjust to the speed, zero-handicap Tom Hughes surprisingly missed the cut, allowing Peter Bach (3) and Rich Schiller (3.5) to sneak into the ladder. But once the playoffs began, the tables were turned. Both top seeds fell to the loser's Bracket thanks to Larry Stettner (beating Butts) and Rich Schiller (beating Rothman). Peter Bach defeated Aviv Katz and Rich Schiller only to face the return of “Sandy” Bob Van Tassell (2010 winner). Van Tassell had edged out Larry Stettner 15-14, but he took it to Bach 22-5 and earned the holder position in the final.

After the first round loss, Ben Rothman recovered his form and began marching on the warpath. The take-no-prisoner approach knocked out Mike Orgill, Larry Stettner, Rich Schiller and Peter Bach allowing no more than 3 points in any game. Mission Hills players may remember the 2010 final in which “Sandy” Bob hit Rothman's leave and ran two perfect breaks to win. Bob would have two chances to emulate his big victory. But not if Ben could help it. Keeping in line with his recent play, Rothman won 26-2, 26-2 without letting Van Tassell take croquet.

Championship Flight:

1. Ben Rothman
2. Bob Van Tassell
3. Peter Bach
4. Rich Schiller
5. Larry Stettner
5. Aviv Katz
7. Mike Orgill
7. Jim Butts
9. Tom Hughes
9. Steve Mossbrook

Doubles:

1. Ben Rothman + Larry Stettner
2. Jim Butts + Aviv Katz
3. Ron Hendry + Mike Orgill
3. Bob Van Tassell + Peter Bach
5. Tom Hughes + Steve Mossbrook

First Flight:

1. Cameron Evans
2. Judy Dahlstrom
3. Nick Gray
4. Cindy Bagby
5. Val Terry
5. Bob Morford

Doubles:

1. Cameron Evans + Carl Myer
2. Nick Gray + Bob Morford
3. Rich Schiller + Val Terry
3. Judy Dahlstrom + Toni Kemp

CHAMPION FLIGHT SINGLES

NAME	HDCP	PLACE
Ben Rothman	-3.5	1st
Bob Van Tassell	0	2nd
Peter Bach	3	3rd
Rich Schiller	3.5	4th
Larry Stettner	1.5	T-5th
Aviv Katz	2.5	T-5th
Mike Orgill	0.5	T-7th
Jim Butts	-1	T-7th
Tom Hughes	0	T-9th
Steve Mossbrook	3.5	T-9th

FIRST FLIGHT SINGLES

NAME	HDCP	PLACE
Cameron Evans	10	1st
Judy Dahlstrom	6	2nd
Nick Gray	11	3rd
Cindy Bagby	6	4th
Val Terry	12	T-5th
Bob Morford	11	T-5th

CHAMPIONSHIP DOUBLES

NAME	HDCP	PLACE
Ben Rothman	-3.5	1st
Larry Stettner	1.5	1st
Jim Butts	-1	2nd
Aviv Katz	2.5	2nd
Ron Hendry	0	T-3rd
Mike Orgill	0.5	T-3rd
Bob Van Tassell	0	T-3rd
Peter Bach	3	T-3rd
Tom Hughes	0	5th
Steve Mossbrook	3.5	5th

FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES

NAME	HDCP	PLACE
Cameron Evans	10	1st
Carl Myer	6	1st
Nick Gray	11	2nd
Bob Morford	11	2nd
Rich Schiller	3.5	T-3rd
Val Terry	12	T-3rd
Judy Dahlstrom	6	T-3rd
Toni Kemp	10	T-3rd