

2012 PIPING ROCK INVITATIONAL

Locust Valley, New York

May 17-20, 2012

They say that some things never change. Take, for example, The Piping Rock Club. Year after year I have had the pleasure of pontificating about the beauty held within every inch of this sprawling property, the grace in which the employees cater to every whim and the effortless style within which the Members conduct one of the best croquet tournaments to be found upon the calendar. The abundance of phenomenal cuisine and casual eloquence, which filters throughout the facility, is by now renowned. Everything within control is perfect and nothing is left to chance. Nothing. Well, almost nothing.

If there was one alteration to be found within this year's celebration, it was the result of a power higher than any member of the hard working Croquet Committee: the weather. Yes, and brace for this...it was perfect! The rain stayed away, puffy clouds kept the heat at bay and while a light sweater may have been found throughout the first round of play each day, this soon led to shorts and sunscreen. Smiles were evident from start to finish and the players simply basked within this glorious event.

As a bonus, and after the completion of two years of renovations, all of the seven lawns in use played flatter and faster than ever. The tournament encompassed four Flights of Singles, three of Waterford doubles and the games were timed at one hour and fifteen minutes, each of the active fifty participants finding three matches per day upon the schedule. All ran smoothly and the action throughout was spirited and competitive.

In the Championship Singles, Rich Curtis took home top honors with a 25-6 victory over Tim Bitting. This may have been somewhat preordained, being that Rich was the only player to defeat the very strong Stuart Lawrence within block play. Stuart's other matches within the preliminary rounds were: 26-3, 26-2, 26-2, and 26-2. Norris Settlemyre and Bob Chilton, who 'stumbled' by Stuart in the Playoffs, tied for Third Place.

In the Championship 'B' Flight, hotshots and college buddies Justin Berbig and Francis Palasieski set the tone with some great play throughout, Francis turning on the gas while beating Justin (26-8) in the Finals. Cynn timer Cagney and George Blake hung around to finally fall in the Semi-Finals. Second Flight honors went to the hard-working Elaine Postley, who snuck past young Ralph Charles (12-11) while Brian Davidson finally found his form with a Third Flight victory (10-6) over the stubborn Joe Quintilion.

Doubles action, always a very social event at Piping Rock, led to some more than strange results. Ted Quimby, who hadn't won a game in the Championship Singles block, captured the Championship Doubles, somewhat expectedly followed by Stuart Lawrence and Cynn timer Cagney. Louis Norris, who was 1-5 in the First Flight Singles, won the First Flight Doubles, Rob Franks and Francis Palasieski trailing shortly behind. And finally, in a Flight within which things almost seemed to make sense, Jason Sztarkier (undefeated in block play) walked away with the Second Flight honors over Ralph Charles and Kelso Sutton.

Overall, no matter what the weather, this tournament is always special. Balls roll, good play is applauded and many, including Singles Plate winners Don Heerens, David Cohen, Bruce Huber and Kelso Sutton, walk away with a souvenir of their long but too short weekend. Still, it is the memories off the lawn that will probably never be lost. From the Opening Reception, through the Player's Dinner, past the Lobster Bake and beyond the Final's Luncheon, it is difficult to forget the ambiance of this event. The subtle moments linger, from year to year and beyond.

The Piping Rock Club is a proud one, and should be. Appreciation is not expected, but should be given. That having been said, and in making a very large list quite condensed, the players asked me to thank, Elaine Postley, Jane Simonds and the whole Croquet Committee, the incredible grounds crew, the entire staff and certainly the unstoppable Bernadette, the smile and the up front action behind the amazing breakfasts and lunches served each day. The Club, likewise, thanks everyone for both joining the Members in sharing this great tradition and hopes to make even more long-term acquaintances next year.

CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT SINGLES

1. Rich Curtis
 2. Tim Bitting
 3. Bob Chilton
 3. Norris Settlemyer
 5. Jane Simonds
 5. John Hunter
 5. Rufus Bayard
 5. Stuart Lawrence
 9. Don Heerens
 10. Ted Quimby
 11. Blaine Davis
 11. Art Parsells
- Plate Winner: Don Heerens

CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT 'B' SINGLES

1. Francis Palasieski
2. Justin Berbig
3. George Blake
3. Cynn timer Cagney
5. Jack Montgomery
5. Sheila Davis
5. Carol Mayo
5. Pat Garner
9. David Cohen
10. Jim McLaughlin
11. Reine Bitting

11. John Postley
Plate Winner: David Cohen

FIRST FLIGHT SINGLES

1. Elaine Postley
2. Ralph Charles
3. Ann Nolte
3. Jake Johnson
5. Templeton Peck
5. Lucie Bard
5. Rob Franks
5. Jennifer Ely
9. Bruce Huber
10. George Mathys
11. Scott Kennedy
11. Louis Norris
Plate Winner: Bruce Huber

SECOND FLIGHT SINGLES

1. Brian Davidson
2. Joseph Quintilian
3. Penny Ferraro
3. Victoria Tutino
5. Lyn Hammer
5. Jason Sztarkier
5. Randi Cudlitz
5. Mary Anne Mathys
9. Kelso Sutton
10. Missy Chilton
11. Franklin Perrell
Plate Winner: Kelso Sutton

CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Ted Quimby
2. Stuart Lawrence
3. Cynn timer Cagney
4. Don Heerens
5. Rufus Bayard
6. George Blake
7. John Hunter
8. Bob Chilton
9. Art Parsells
10. Jack Montgomery

11. Norris Settlemyer
12. Rich Curtis
13. Blaine Davis
14. Justin Berbig
15. Reine Bitting
16. Tim Bitting

FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Louis Norris
2. Rob Franks
3. Francis Palasieski
4. Sheila Davis
5. Carol Mayo
6. Zoe deRopp
7. John Postley
8. Pat Garner
9. Elaine Postley
10. David Cohen
11. Lucie Bard
12. Jake Johnson
13. Ann Nolte
14. Scott Kennedy
15. Jim McLaughlin
16. Templeton Peck

SECOND FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Jason Sztarkier
2. Ralph Charles
3. Kelso Sutton
4. Victoria Tutino
5. Missy Chilton
6. Randi Cudlitz
7. Mary Anne Mathys
8. Mary Louise Whitmarsh
9. Penny Ferraro
10. George Mathys
11. Brian Davidson
12. Jennifer Ely
13. Joseph Quintilian
14. Franklin Perrell
15. Julia Wallace
16. Bruce Huber

-John C. Osborn (TD)