

USCA Western Regional Championships 2012
“Best in the West”

The busiest croquet club in the union completed its historic season with the Western Regionals this April. Mission Hills managed to host all three USCA National Championships and the ACA's U.S. Open along with the usual club tournaments and invitationals in one six-month stretch. The busy schedule was the fruit of Ron and Genie Hendry's hard labor and the finale of their presidential term for the Mission Hills Croquet Club. As the Western Regional Vice President, Ron also had the task of running the Regional Championship late in the season as his last effort.

Fifteen players threw their hats in the ring and vied for the title of “Best in the West” along with ensuring their eligibility for the Nationals this October. The limited field allowed for single-banked games and a casually paced schedule. Two flights of singles were contested in three blocks of five players allowing one player to sit out each round, a refreshing indulgence in the 95 degree heat. With only six doubles teams, block play allowed for a full round robin before dividing the teams into two flights. Four teams played a single elimination ladder for championship flight and the remaining two teams “qualified” for the first flight final match.

Despite the heat, players were able to enjoy the week in the desert thanks to a fun bunch of social events. The opening party was full of mexican flare at La Casita and there were two mid-week cocktail parties; one at the home of Mary and Kern Rodeberg and another at the nearby bar in the tennis center. After the finals, there was a plain lunch followed by a glamorous “Gatsby” dinner party where 65 Mission Hills members and the Regional competitors came dressed to impress!

On the courts, two competitors rose above the din and set their sights on one another in the first flight. Marvin Salles, a crafty competitor who won the Mission Hills President's Cup Club Championship, has been dropping his handicap each year and creeping towards the championship flight with his reliable hitting and aggressive break ability. On the other side, Cameron Evans has cultivated his great resume of accomplishments (Golf National Doubles Champion, Mission Hills Invitational Champion, Pat Apple Champion) in just one season! Cameron played a little bit of golf croquet last season with his parents, Louann (his National Champion partner in Golf Croquet) and Jerry (who recently passed away), but Cameron spent the summer of 2011 practicing American and Association Rules. The practice paid off as Cameron narrowly defeated Marvin (and everyone else) to take the top seed in the block.

Marvin and Cameron moved through the semi-finals over Mission Hills skillful sophomores Bob Morford and Nick Gray and into a grudge match final. Both players ran breaks (Cameron even went to the peg) and Marvin was behind down the stretch. Cameron's inexperience showed as he neglected to keep Marvin dead using his rover ball (a standard rover play) and Marvin positioned himself for a break in last turns. Marvin only needed to make the last two hoops to tie and peg out for the win. Cameron had a forty foot shot to ruin all of Marvin's plans, but he suffered a rare miss and left Marvin a clear path to victory. Marvin had total control, but his lack of play this season may have cost him as he under-approached the rover hoop leaving himself a difficult angled hoop shot. The ball failed to score the hoop and Cameron survived the last turns to win 17-16 in a dramatic show. With his impressive rise to first flight success, Cameron may be in line for the USCA's rookie-of-the-year award.

The doubles competition was bound to have a new Western Champion as neither Bob Van Tassell nor his partner Steve Scalpone returned to defend their 2011 title. Ben Rothman took last minute entry and world championship competitor Peter Bach as his partner and dominated the block. Rothman and Bach were responsible for 5 of the 6 games that went to the peg and only had trouble with the team of Jim Butts and Aviv Katz. The familiar team of Butts and Katz had only one other loss

to the scrappy duo of Mary Rodeberg and Steve Mossbrook. Mary and Steve had a powerful offensive ability but their true skill lie in the tight end-game with all four of their victories coming by 3 or fewer hoops. Ron Hendry and Mike Orgill earned the fourth spot in the Championship ladder.

The semi-finals held true to the seeding pitting Mary and Steve against Ben and Peter in the final. Ben and Peter were slipping; their semi-final victory was their closest game yet and they failed to peg out. In the final, neither team had a convincing break and play was tight throughout. Most attacks faltered and with so many opportunities squandered, deadness management became critical. In the end Steve earned a two ball chance to tie the game, but Peter had one shot to ruin it all. From sixty feet away Peter ticked Steve's ball and was able to put it behind the hoop negating any chance that the three-ball-dead Mossbrook could come back to win. Ben Rothman and Peter Bach took the title in their lowest scoring game of the tournament 14-10.

Ben and Peter continued their success in the singles side, both earning the number one seeds. Steve Mossbrook outperformed his fellow 3.5 handicap Len Lyon for the last spot in the playoffs and Mary Rodeberg edged out Ron Hendry to grab the number four seed. Once the playoffs begin, it's a whole new tournament. Peter Bach turned his undefeated block play into a first round exit thanks to the late blooming Steve Mossbrook while Jim Butts and Aviv Katz were forced to focus on doubles after their losses to Mike Orgill and Rich Schiller, respectively. Mike Orgill ran into the same buzz saw that Mary experienced with Ben Rothman attempting to play as aggressively as he could with much success. Rich Schiller had a much more interesting go at it, but lost a squeaker to Steve 15-13. Ben and Steve would move right from the doubles final against each other to the singles contest. A few minutes into the final Ben left a window open to attack, but Steve could not get the first few hoops out of the way. After two breaks and what some refer to as "same song different verse" Rothman finished his undefeated tournament and retained the John Taylor plaque as the USCA Western Regional Champion.

CHAMPION FLIGHT SINGLES

NAME	PLACE
Ben Rothman	1st
Steve Mossbrook	2nd
Mike Orgill	T-3rd
Rich Schiller	T-3rd
Peter Bach	T-5th
Jim Butts	T-5th
Aviv Katz	T-5th
Mary Rodeberg	T-5th
Ron Hendry	T-9th
Len Lyon	T-9th

CHAMPIONSHIP DOUBLES

NAME	PLACE
Ben Rothman	1st
Peter Bach	1st
Steve Mossbrook	2nd
Mary Rodeberg	2nd
Ron Hendry	T-3rd
Mike Orgill	T-3rd
Jim Butts	T-3rd
Aviv Katz	T-3rd

FIRST FLIGHT SINGLES

NAME	PLACE
Cameron Evans	1st
Marvin Salles	2nd
Bob Morford	T-3rd
Nick Gray	T-3rd
Judy Dahlstrom	5th

FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES

NAME	PLACE
Bob Morford	1st
Nick Gray	1st
Rich Schiller	2nd
Judy Dahlstrom	2nd



Ron Hendry, Judy Dahlstrom, Rich Schiller, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Bob Morford, Nick Gray, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Steve Mossbrook, Karen Rodeberg, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Peter Bach, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Marvin Salles, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Cameron Evans, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Steve Mossbrook, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Ben Rothman



Ron Hendry, Peter Bach, Ben Rothman



Bob & Marilyn Morford



Ben Rothman



Ben Rothman, Bea & Aviv Katz