

2013 USCA CLUB TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS
The National Croquet Center
West Palm Beach, FL 33401
March 13-17, 2013

In what has certainly been the busiest croquet season ever for the Palm Beaches, it should come as no surprise that entries into this year's Club Team Championships also exceeded expectations. Records were certainly set, the most obvious being the 130 participants who flocked to the National Croquet Center for what is always the most sociable event upon the USCA calendar. The National Croquet Club, based at the NCC, managed to field an incredible 21 teams while, in the 'warm and fuzzy' category, Les 'The Commish' Kelley and Bernie 'The Attorney' Pattie each celebrated their 25th straight year of attendance at the celebration. "Shucks," said Les warmly. "Where am I?", asked Bernie in words fuzzy at best.

Of course, there does reach a limit at which too much of a good thing can cause some, well, issues. While the popularity of the event continues to grow, the number of lawns at the NCC do not. The problem was now how to fit such a large field upon the twelve lawns and still offer a satisfactory amount of on-court play. As it turns out, several changes occurred. To start with, in order to break down the competition equally, let alone to allow for fluid scheduling, a Flight was added, thus making a total of six. Likewise, while in the past the Club Teams Championships had always offered double-elimination Playoffs, this now became impossible. And while the Playoffs usually started Saturday morning at the very latest, the straight ladder now became a Sunday affair, with 40-50 percent making day five still wearing whites.

Those players expecting to find three games-per-day now found this to be the case only on one of the first four days, two games being the maximum for the remainder. The Fifth Flight stumbled into only two matches per day throughout. Overall, six rounds of play, starting at 8:30 AM, were held until Sunday, with time-limits being set at one hour and fifteen minutes. The Tournament Director, or 'clock-nazi', kept everything running smoothly so that the evening social events went without delay. There was no double-banking, but due to the simple 'girth' of the field, players/teams would sometimes find long gaps between matches while at other times would find that their play was completed in half a day. Unfortunately, this was the nature of the beast, and hopefully everyone shared equally within the format.

The weather throughout the event was wonderful, if not just a bit cool for those already based in Florida. Wind and these low temperatures combined to make the lawns play very fast, and thus game scores seemed low and below the normal average. Twenty-six points seemed like a dream and was found only a handful of times. While even though within the Championship Flight, in one game, neither team was able to reach double digits, the First Flight claimed the bragging rights (cough) with one match which ended with a 3-2 victory. (Yes, there was a lot of sitting down.) In the last three Flights, eleven points was usually enough secure success.

Of course, while there were six Flights within which to claim a doubles-team victory and the esteem which comes with it, it is the Lyon's Trophy that remain the main Prize. Generally speaking, this award goes to the Club which achieves the greatest degree of success, points awarded according to the top five finishing positions within each of the six Flights. Within the event the field is also divided into three Divisions, each Division determined by the number of teams a Club sends. Simply put, the more teams a Club sends the better the chance it has of winning the Lyon's Trophy. Those Clubs who send a small number of teams still have the chance to win a Division. This year, Clubs with 8-21 teams formed Division One, those with 2-3 Division Two and those with but one team fell into Division Three.

From here some intriguing comparisons come into play. The National Croquet Club won both Division One and the Lyon's Trophy, and should have given the numbers (21 teams) available to compete. Still, West River Wickets, which sent but eight teams and had only three in

the first three Flights, was not a far off second and deserves a large round of applause. To show how interesting things can get, the National Croquet Club had, within the First Flight, seven teams entered in a group of twelve. None finished in the top four positions, thus proving that numbers alone guarantee nothing. Mission Hills, playing in the Second Division with but two teams at hand, finished Third in the overall Lyon's totals with wins by Rothman-Butts and Mossbrook-Rodeberg in the first two Flights, certainly the most impressive performance.

No matter how the numbers finally fell, I can express without retrospect that all of the participants enjoyed what was a wonderful week. Actually, I should say five days, unless one also partook within the three day Golf Croquet Championships, the Management Seminar or the simultaneously held three day Tournament Prep School, all held just before the Clubs, or the regular three day USCA School, held just before that. As I have mentioned in the past, they call it "Croquet Week," but it is more like a marathon of activity. And if you wonder why the incredible USCA Staff, NCC Head Pro, Bill Mead, the NCC staff in general and yours truly looked a little tired by the Sunday Finals...the days are wonderful, but long.

Throughout the span of activities, including receptions and great lunches, Player Dinners and Lobster Feasts, Award Ceremonies and an Annual Meeting, auctions, raffles, an always active bar and a great sense of community throughout, smiles were difficult not to find. Almost as a side thought, I must say that the crazy-level of the characters involved did seem to be a bit less colorful this year...less screaming and falling down. I'm not sure whether this is a good thing or not, but I do think it has a lot to do with three things: 1) St. Patrick's Day was the last day of the event as opposed to early on, perhaps resetting the tone. (Players were encouraged, and did, wear green over the weekend. Good photos available.) 2) Given the new format, block play counted for, well, everything...a far walk from the days in which everyone made those double elimination Playoffs. And 3) When The Commish (Les Kelley and after a little medical thing) doesn't drink as much, no one does. Period. Kind of.

The Club Team Championships this year, as always, turned out to be a fantastic event. The great problem of having so many players was spoken of often, and strangely enough, soft opinions were mostly split. And none spoken with urgency. Some expressed a to play more matches while some enjoyed the free time to spend time with friends. Some discussed adding a second venue, while others enjoyed the unity and the solidarity of everyone acting as one unit. While some promoted double-banking, many rejected the option and highlighted the casual nature of play. Some disliked gaps between games, or short days, while others were thankful to have free time. Is a double elimination better? Sure, but things are as they are. Adding a round of play each day? Impossible for court maintenance and social activities. Cap the number of players? Or teams that came from one Club? Well, we all enjoy croquet because, at its root, it is ability to play with friends...how does one draw the line?

Overall, this was a fantastic event! Everyone who made the Playoffs earned it, and those who made the Finals deserved the chance to be the last team standing. Strangely, four out of the six block winners within each Flight failed to make these Finals, which should give everyone hope for the future. And whether you made it or not, the Club Team Championships are basically the yearly convention of croquet. (Without the need to wear a tie.) It's the best party upon the calendar, and the USCA hopes that everyone joins for the festivities. There are stories to be written.

CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT

- 1. Ben Rothman – Jim Butts**
- 2. Derek Wassink – Stewart Jackson**
- 3. Bob Chilton – John Phaneuf**
- 3. Johnny Mitchell – Lee Slataper**
- 5. Bill Mead-John Warlick**

- Mission Hills**
- NCC**
- PGA**
- Houston**
- NCC**

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| 5. Peter Just – Tim Bitting | NCC |
| 7. John Young III – Doug Moore | Bombay |
| 8. Ted Prentis – Justin Berbig | Bombay |
| 9. Sherif Abdelwahab – Sandy Walsh | Int'l Tennis HOF |
| 10. David McCoy – Bob Van Tassell | NCC |
| 11. Josie Jackson – Cheryl Harders | Bombay |
| 12. Ed O'Laughlin – John Dusenbury | Baltimore CC |

FIRST FLIGHT

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|----------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Steve Mossbrook – Mary Rodeberg | Mission Hills |
| 2. Les Kelley – Dave Cohen | Bombay |
| 3. Peter Oleson – Stephen Morgan | West River Wickets |
| 3. Perry Mattson – Fred Beck | Woodlawn |
| 5. John Blamire – Larry McDermott | NCC |
| 5. Pat Colt – Joe Knoll | NCC |
| 7. Ruth Summers – Ray Liberti | NCC |
| 8. Barbara Leeming – Zoe deRopp | NCC |
| 9. Bob Yount – Betty Whitlow | PGA |
| 10. Conrad Rugart – Judy Just | NCC |
| 11. Victoria Albrecht – Jerry Waechter | NCC |
| 12. Jerry Luecke – Joe Pierotti | NCC |

SECOND FLIGHT

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|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Calvert Chaney – Roy Morgan | West River Wickets |
| 2. Randall McAndrews – George Forsyth | Mariner Sands Country Club |
| 3. Geraldine McCauley – Ron Atkins | NCC |
| 3. Bernie Pattie – Dan Lawrence | Bombay |
| 5. Lee Hanna – Lynn Leblanc | Bombay |
| 5. Margo Stinson – Robert Young | PGA |
| 7. George Fulmer – Ted Cooley | Bombay |
| 8. Charles Alexander – Tim McCormick | Woodlawn |
| 9. Templeton Peck – Peter Timmins | Bombay |
| 10. Robin Sweet – Joy Bradford | PGA |
| 11. Sara Low – Karen Kaplan | NYCC |
| 12. John Woodside – Cody Aichele | NYCC |

THIRD FLIGHT

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|----------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Dick Scherf – Arlene McDermott | NCC |
| 2. Robert Chelberg – Harry Lloyd | PGA |
| 3. Webster Bull – Bob Worrell | Sorrento |
| 3. Ted Hilles – Jane Osgood | NYCC |
| 5. Monica Uhlhorn – Dianne Sadowski | PGA |
| 6. Allan Ridall – David Spivey | NCC |
| 7. Penny Ferraro – Missy Diack-Chilton | PGA |
| 8. Kelso Sutton – Karen Heckman | Bombay |
| 9. Tom Stoner – Rodney Calver | West River Wickets |
| 10. Carla Rueck – Jeanne Branthover | NCC |

FOURTH FLIGHT

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Byron Lee – Lin Irely | West River Wickets |
| 2. Linda Harris – Sharyl Forster | NCC |
| 3. Peter Stevens – Hal Denton | West River Wickets |
| 3. Carol DiFazio – Stephanie Hayes | NCC |
| 5. Anne Licursi – Rosemary Faulconer | PGA |
| 6. Brian Cooke – Erinn Cooke | Baltimore CC |
| 7. Bob Duryea – Lovejoy Duryea | Westhampton |
| 8. Flavia Logie – Franklin Perrell | Bombay |
| 9. Jay Graham – Eugenia Wilkie | West River Wickets |
| 10. Julie Wallace – Nancy Hunt | NCC |

FIFTH FLIGHT

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Gail Rubin – Pat Muir | NCC |
| 2. Jeanne Fernald – Don Parker | Woodlawn |
| 3. Warren Phillips – Mary Shields | NCC |
| 3. Bill Krause – Nancy Morgan | West River Wickets |
| 5. Oakley Johnson – Peter Hunt | Sorrento |
| 6. Mary Robb – Lisa Brown | PGA |
| 7. Sally McGrath – Emily Schelter | Westhampton |
| 8. Sheila McCauley – Freear Pollard | Westhampton |
| 9. Liddy Chaney – Jasmine Morgan | West River Wickets |

LYONS TROPHY TOTALS

OVERALL WINNER: NATIONAL CROQUET CLUB

Division One

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|-------------------------------------|----|
| 1. The National Croquet Club | 28 |
| 2. West River Wickets | 18 |
| 3. The Croquet Club at PGA National | 9 |
| 4. The Bombay Mallet & Wicket Club | 7 |

Division Two

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|---------------------------------|----|
| 1. Mission Hills Croquet Club | 10 |
| 2. Woodlawn Croquet Program | 6 |
| 3. Sorrento V.I.A. Croquet Club | 4 |
| 4. New York Croquet Club | 2 |
| 4. Baltimore Croquet Club | 0 |
| 4. Westhampton Mallet Club | 0 |

Division Three

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|------------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Mariner Sands Country Club | 4 |
| 2. Houston Croquet Association | 2 |
| 3. Int. Tennis Hall of Fame Croquet Club | 0 |