

2013 GREENWICH CROQUET CLUB INVITATIONAL

June 26-29, 2013

I can only imagine what the deer's last thoughts were: "Hey, I know her! That's Suzanne Spangenberg! Wow, I haven't seen her speed by in a while. Wish she could find the breaks from time to time to witness the beauty that I am! Speaking of which, I should probably get out of the..." Splat. Suzanne, on the other hand, probably had only two words in her mind before the front end of her car was unintentionally detailed, and those words were, more likely than not, not "Oh Deer". While both she and her passenger, Maryholt (collateral damage) Maxwell, were lucky to remain uninjured after the encounter, the deer could not say the same. Bob Lowery's fender-bender (no live stock involved) also resulted in no injuries, but he was forced to miss his last two single block matches. Details are still forthcoming about that one, but I will say that he was playing well and 2-1 when the 'incident' occurred.

The reason I mention all of this, or the moral of the story, is that one should always expect the unexpected, and unexpect the expected, at least whenever any croquet tournament acts as the backdrop. In this case, the 2013 Greenwich Croquet Club Invitational, weather became the main issue. And for four days, at both The Field Club and at Bruce Park, all 36 participants plodded on despite the eternal threat of flash flooding. No, I am not exactly certain what 'flash flooding' means in Greenwich, but I did get the general idea that a lot of rain would be involved. And lightning. And thunder. And by the look on the face of one TV meteorologist (Penelope Storm), she was apparently biting off her tongue simply to avoid saying: we are all doomed!

As things turned out, and despite the fact that clouds lurked on and off throughout the event, homes were not swept away, the croquet lawns found no daylight precipitation and the two tons of rain gear hauled to the lawns each day went unused. Penelope may have had a day off, but as I was packing for my trip back to Florida, a guy named Exaltar was demonstrating a Ouija board while calling for the chance of further weather in the future. Overall, the climate was just fine in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The format for all three flights of both singles and doubles was block play leading to single elimination ladders. Players generally swapped between locations and all action was held at Bruce Park for the final day. And if you can have Bob Kroeger as an assistant TD at one of the two locations, you know that you are playing in a class event! When you least expected it, lurking Bob was always there to pop out of the woods and over the sidelines, intently ready to referee and arbitrate any issue which might have occurred.

In the Championship Singles Flight, while out-of-practice and almost forgotten, Jeff Sharp. Paul Phoenix and slow moving Michael Zuro did impress, Jack Montgomery did way less than, well, well. Way less. Ruminating about his performance, and making me promise not to mention his 0-5 block performance, Jack said: I think I have hit a plateau. In my mind, hitting a deer might have been a better excuse. On the other hand, Chris Patmore (-3) had already dusted off his mantle for the great trophy that would certainly come with his victory, his opponent eventually to be squashed like road-kill. But hold on Big Guy! Having finally gone to rover, even after a series of miss-hits, spunky Stephen Morgan (4.5...now) hit what was not the perfect, but a darn-close to perfect leave. The rest...peg out the opponent, try not to look to happy and capture (18-14) a title rich in history.

Within the Championship Doubles, Stephen was forced to play with his father, Roy Morgan (8). Okay, not really forced, since they opted to play together, but you get the idea. As it turned out, opponents Chris Christian and his enthusiastic partner, Rich Watson, paid little attention to any family feuds that might have occurred, sneaking into the winner's circle with a one point (15-14) differential. Chris played well throughout the entire event, until the Finals. Rich played poorly throughout, until the Finals. Go figure. And, honestly, the good communication (unexpected) between Stephen and Roy was somewhat inspiring...the will staying unchanged.

It was the First Flight which was perhaps the best balanced, and all matches were tight and tense. Webster Bull, or Bull Webster (6) as it was listed on the charts (and it does sound better that way), looked much the best throughout the event. He captured this Flight with a decisive 16-7 victory over the impressive 9-handicapped Thomas Schick. (Championship Flight players should take note of that last sentence.) In the Doubles division, Webster and his partner, Arthur Olsen, did not fair as well, falling to the

sexy Gerry McCauley and her handsome partner, Ridley Rhind. Playing an unadvised attempt at a wicket when an attack would have made more sense, Bull (or Webster) failed, thus allowing Gerry the chance to score two wickets and post the 14-13 score. Great spirit throughout, and that should be applauded!

While another Morgan, 23 year old Jasmine, was catching the eyes and ears of both participants and spectators within the Second Flight, it was Terry Moor (11) who let his mallet do the talking. Terry defeated (15-12) the wild, young and crazy Daniel Popov (11) in the Finals. Not that Daniel will not be a great player faster than you can blink, but sometimes something that can be done doesn't always make it the thing which should be attempted. Expect the unexpected doesn't always translate into a good idea. And speaking of the unexpected, and just when you thought the fix was in, Daniel and GCC President, Lee Kennedy, were looking certain to capture the Second Flight Doubles. Well, not so much. Blinded by the short shorts of both Suzanne ("Oh Deer") Spangenberg and Jasmine Morgan, they fell (10-14) to a fantastic odd-couple. Once again, go figure.

In general, everyone, except for one deer, had a great time throughout! John Curington celebrated his 21st entry into this event, and it is hoped that many will try to overcome this existing record! Lee Kennedy, Club President, did a phenomenal job, from both encouraging participation to making certain that those involved were treated like stars. Great communication! Barbara and Emily Leeming made certain that all of the participants were both fed and hydrated. Brian Scanlon and Cynthia Chang again hosted a fantastic player's dinner, and help from all of the Greenwich Croquet Club Members came without encouragement! Many people took credit for the weather, so let's call that an overall win!

Speaking for both Bob Kroeger and myself, this is a wonderful event. If you haven't played in Greenwich, put it on your schedule. Great company and fantastic venues. Just keep your eyes on the road!

FINAL RESULTS

CHAMPIONSHIP SINGLES

1. Stephen Morgan
2. Chris Patmore
3. Charles Christian
3. Michael Zuro
5. Dave Cohen
5. Gerry McCauley
5. Jeff Sharpe
5. John Curington
9. Paul Phoenix
10. Rich Watson
11. Jack Montgomery
11. Maryholt Maxwell

FIRST FLIGHT

1. Webster Bull
2. Thomas Schick
3. Arthur Olsen
3. Roy Morgan
5. Bob Lowery (dnf)
5. Lloyd Hadden
7. Bob Seelert
8. Richard Schleiter

SECOND FLIGHT SINGLES

1. Terry Moor
2. Daniel Popov

3. Jasmine Morgan
3. Ridley Rhind
5. Lawrence Kurland
5. Suzanne Spangenberg
7. Andrew Parsons
8. Lee Kennedy
8. Patricia Spratt
10. Anne Schick

CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Charles Christian -Rich Watson
2. Stephen Morgan-Roy Morgan
3. Jack Montgomery-Bill Duncan
3. John Curington-Jeff Sharpe
5. Michael Zuro-Dave Cohen
6. Paul Phoenix-Maryholt Maxwell

FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Gerry McCauley-Ridley Rhind
2. Webster Bull-Arthur Olsen
3. Anne Schick-Bob Lowery
4. Richard Schleiter-Lawrence Kurland
4. Andrew Parsons-Pat Spratt

SECOND FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Suzanne Spangenberg-Jasmine Morgan
2. Daniel Popov-Lee Kennedy
3. Terry Moor-Paul Duvivier
4. Eugenia Wilkie-Kay Chapin
5. Peter Bell-Penelope Bell

-John C. Osborn (TD)