

# 2013 USCA American Rules National Championships

Mission Hills Croquet Club in Rancho Mirage, California

Mission Hills Country Club rolled out the green carpet for the 41 players in this year's National Championships. At least, that's what the seven ideal lawns resembled for the 37<sup>th</sup> annual competition. The weather matched the near perfect lawns with warm breezes and comfortable enough temperatures for players to eschew their white jackets and sweatshirts. With the sun disappearing behind the San Jacinto range as early as 4:30, a few days required peg downs and flashlights, but the playoffs progressed quickly enough for a timely finish on Sunday.



Five former champions had their work cut out for them in block play. The unusual 25 player required unusual block formats with two 8-player blocks and one occluded 9-player block. All players had seven game results to compare for the playoffs with most recent champions Ben Rothman and Danny Huneycutt going undefeated and taking the top seeds. Brian Cumming, Rich Lamm and Rick Sheely managed 6 wins while Doug Grimsley and Sherif Abdelwahab had a solid 5-2 record. Former champions Jeff Soo and Britt Ruby barely scraped their way into the knockout at 3-4, but both were

prepared to play the spoiler as soon as the playoffs began.

The first flight proved that not all handicaps are created equal. Local sharp shooters Cameron Evans and Nick Gray have earned their 7 handicaps through many Mission Hills tournaments and they upset several 4-5 handicaps on their way to the number 2 and 3 seeds (respectively). The top seed was taken by New York native Dave Cohen who was undefeated through the block including games against Nick and Cam. Len Lyon, Harold Menzel and Donald Smith all tied with Nick and Cam with 4 wins so the playoffs had no clear favorites to challenge young Mr. Cohen.

Three first flight players were brave enough to try out championship flight doubles. Sandy Knuth played with travel buddy Sherif Abdelwahab and Mary Rodeberg played with fellow Minnesotan Rick Sheely, but it was the New Paltz alumni team of Jusin Berbig and Dave Cohen who managed to make the playoffs as one of the top eight teams. Recent Champions Ben Rothman and Brian Cumming shared a 6-1 record with Danny Huneycutt and Harper Peterson while two time champions Doug Grimsley and Rich Curtis earned the four seed with four wins. It was former MacRobertson shield team Jeff Soo and Rich Lamm who took the top seed with an undefeated block record.

There was a wonderful mid-week dinner at the country club featuring a USCA auction for the Lee Olsen fund. The Lee Olsen fund was started to support the US teams that compete in international tests. These include the Solomon Trophy, Carter Challenge, World Golf Croquet Team Championship and the MacRobertson Shield. The MacRobertson Shield will be in New Zealand starting December 31<sup>st</sup> with the US team competing against New Zealand, Australia and England for the historic trophy. The US team joined the “MacRob” in 1993 and has finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the last four competitions. The auction featured mallets, lessons from croquet instructors, croquet artwork and some very unique collections of wine and liquor. Between the auction and the sales of US team supporter pins, over \$6,500 was raised for our MacRob team!



Friday morning the knockout ladders began. First flight doubles had several strong teams including two of the highest ranked players in the first flight Len Lyon and Alan Langley playing together. Alan and Len managed a few victories, but only by a small margin. The aforementioned duo of Nick and Cam were able to run their breaks and run over most of the competition with scores in the 20s. Nick and Cam's only loss in the block was to Alan and Len (19-17). In the knockout Alan and Len got down to business with a 26-11 victory over Don Smith and Pat Dugan, but still could not top Nick and Cam in the semi-finals. After a brief stint in the loser's bracket squeezing past Dick Engebretson and Bob Morford by just two points, Alan and Len faced Nick and Cam having to win twice in a row. Nick and Cam used their break running prowess to jump ahead in the first game of the finals, but Len and Alan made a desperate attack and Len built a game-winning break as time elapsed. With the break in hand, Len had his sights set on game two, but he swished though 4-back and went out of

bounds. Len and Alan fell short by one wicket and Nick and Cameron (both 7 handicaps) became national champions.



*Ben Rothman (Tournament Director), Cameron Evans & Nick Gray (First Flight Doubles Champions), Johnny Mitchell (USCA President)*

In championship doubles locals Jim Butts and Steve Mossbrook shook up the ladder like an etch-a-sketch and re-wrote almost everyone's fate. Jim and Steve had the fifth seed and slowly squeezed former champions Doug Grimsley and Rich Curtis down into the loser's ladder with a 14-11 win. In the next round Jim and Steve nearly handed Jeff and Rich their first defeat with a last turns battle that Jeff and Rich won 15-14. Doug and Rich went on to tear it up through the loser's ladder. Danny Huneycutt and his hard working partner Harper Peterson defeated team Texas (Britt Ruby and Bob Chilton) and the reigning champions (Ben and Brian) but were knocked down by the top seeds (26-2). Doug and Rich knocked out the New Paltz kids and then pegged out Ben to defeat him and Brian by one. Hall of fame member Bob Chilton and Britt Ruby were able to handle Jim and Steve (18-17) but could not keep up with Doug and Rich. Danny and Harper dropped in on Doug and Rich's party and outlasted the perennial partnership 18-14 for a chance to take down Jeff and Rich in the final. The finals were very defensive with many attacks turning into conservative leaves (or no leave at all) to take-away any chance of a game changing hit-in. Jeff and Rich completed a few more of these low reward attacks and when it came to last turns they attacked just to groom the court and take the championship undefeated.



*Rich Lamm (Doubles Champion), Danny Hunycutt & Harper Peterson (Doubles Runners-Up), Jeff Soo (Doubles Champion)*

First flight singles was a rather boring progression for Dave Cohen, but his challengers had quite the round robin. Other than Dave, every first round game was an upset! Harold Menzel beat the low handicapped Len Lyon while Don Smith and Mary Rodeberg finally beat Nick and Cam (respectively). Dave continued his streak over Harold in the second round while Mary turned her seven seed into a semi-finals berth. Alan Langley defeated his partner, Len, in the loser's ladder and followed up with victories over Don and Cam. Dave shot his way out of trouble against Mary, but Mary dismantled Alan Langley in the loser's bracket final 24-6. In the final match Mary took the lead by running around to the peg and looked to be in control until Dave built himself an all-around break. Dave took no prisoners as he knocked Mary's rover ball out of the game and played the conservative 2 on 1 to take the national title with a perfect record.



*Ben Rothman (Tournament Director), Dave Cohen (First Flight Champion), Mary Rodeberg (First Flight Runner-Up), Johnny Mitchell (USCA President)*

The championship knockout was rife with upsets; even the 12 seed beat the top seed. That 12 seed, however, was Jeff Soo. In years past Jeff's former partner Paul Scott has been very successful using block play as his warmup and barely making the playoffs only to prove that once warmed up, he was the best player in the tournament. Some of this has seemingly rubbed off on Mr. Soo. Jeff leveraged his low seed and took over the 5 spot with a very clean victory over Rick Sheely followed by a 26-2 effort over USCA President Johnny Mitchell. Jeff knocked out the undefeated Ben Rothman in similar fashion to earn his spot as the holder in the double elimination semi-finals. On the other side of the bracket Doug Grimsley shook off the rust and removed his knee brace to walk over undefeated Danny Huneycutt 26-4 followed by a 26-2 rout of Sherif Abdelwahab. Sherif had defeated past champion Brian Cumming and beat the hard-charging Harper Peterson in the loser's bracket to earn an uphill battle against Jeff. Brian went on to knock out the top two seeds, Danny and Ben, in quick succession only to fall to Doug in the first game of the semi-finals. Doug used the same tactic in singles and doubles pegging one ball out and forcing Brian to desperate measures in both of Brian's last gasps. Jeff quickly defeated Sherif and set up a best-of-three final with the hearty tuna boat Captain and frequent teammate Doug Grimsley.



*Ben Rothman (Tournament Director), Doug Grimsley (Finalist), Jeff Soo (Finalist), Johnny Mitchell (USCA President)*

On the morning of the final the audience was well supplied with bloody mary's and mimosas which only added to the atmosphere for the competitors. The first game had a hermit crab opening with Jeff keeping two balls out of the game until the coast was clear for him to emerge. Doug took the opportunity to two-ball it a little, but a quick misstep allowed Jeff to come in and attack. Watching two expertly crafted breaks is a wonderful learning experience for some, but many would rather watch it on fast forward. Jeff promptly took game one 26-5. The second game was much more interactive with a few missed hoops and failed attacks allowing for interesting deadness battles and more desperation. Now the spectators were fully engaged. Doug finally got a break around, but decided to peel his partner (for hoop five) while he ran the rover hoop. The Irish peel is intended to put both balls through the hoop, but from 2-3 feet the swing must be nearly perfect as any slight inaccuracy is doubled by the fact that this is a split shot. Doug completed the peel nicely, but hit the right stanchion and had no chance to score the rover hoop. Doug retreated into the corner and Jeff repeated his feats from game one to finish 26-16. Jeff Soo won his fifth American rules singles title which broke the record of four he shared with Archie Peck. This is the third time Jeff has won both singles and doubles at the American Rules National Championships which is also a new record breaking his tie with Ben Rothman.



*Ben Rothman (Tournament Director), Jeff Soo (Champion), Johnny Mitchell (USCA President)*



*Jeff Soo (Champion)*

**CHAMPION FLIGHT SINGLES**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>HDCP</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>TRK PTS</b>
<b>Jeff Soo</b>	<b>-3.5</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Doug Grimsley</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Sherif Abdelwahab</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>T-3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Brian Cumming</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>T-3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Ben Rothman</b>	<b>-4.5</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-7</b>
<b>Harper Peterson</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Danny Huneycutt</b>	<b>-4.5</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-7</b>
<b>Britt Ruby</b>	<b>-2.5</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-11</b>
<b>Nelson Morrow</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>T-9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Johnny Mitchell</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>T-9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-9</b>
<b>Jim Butts</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>T-9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Rick Sheely</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>T-9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Rich Lamm</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>T-13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Bob Roth</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>T-13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Peter Just</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>T-13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-4</b>
<b>Norris Settlemyre</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>T-13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Steve Mossbrook</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>T-17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Bob Chilton</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>T-17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Rich Curtis</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>T-17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-10</b>
<b>Missy Ramey</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>T-17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-5</b>
<b>Mike Todorovich</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>T-17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-4</b>
<b>Jodie Rugart</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>T-17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Martyn Selman</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>T-23<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Justin Berbig</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>T-23<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Donna Dixon</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>3</b>



**FIRST FLIGHT SINGLES**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>HDCP</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>TRK PTS</b>
<b>Dave Cohen</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Mary Rodeberg</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Alan Langley</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>-16</b>
<b>Cameron Evans</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Donald Smith</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-9</b>
<b>Harold Menzel</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Nick Gray</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Len Lyon</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-14</b>
<b>Sandy Knuth</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>T-9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>-12</b>
<b>Bob Morford</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>T-9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Pat Dugan</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Gary Neal</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>0</b>

**CHAMPIONSHIP DOUBLES**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>HDCP</b>	<b>PLACE</b>
<b>Jeff Soo</b>	<b>-3.5</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>
<b>Rich Lamm</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>
<b>Danny Huneycutt</b>	<b>-4.5</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>
<b>Harper Peterson</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>
<b>Doug Grimsley</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>
<b>Rich Curtis</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>
<b>Britt Ruby</b>	<b>-2.5</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Bob Chilton</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Ben Rothman</b>	<b>-4.5</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Brian Cumming</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Jim Butts</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Steve Mossbrook</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Johnny Mitchell</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Peter Just</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Justin Berbig</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Dave Cohen</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Martyn Selman</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Nelson Morrow</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Rick Sheely</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>T-10<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Mary Rodeberg</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>T-10<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Jodie Rugart</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>T-10<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Bob Roth</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>T-10<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Missy Ramey</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>T-10<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Conrad Rugart</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>T-10<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Norris Settlemyre</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>T-10<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Mike Todorovich</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>T-10<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Sherif Abdelwahab</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Sandy Knuth</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>

**FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES**

NAME	HDCP	PLACE
<b>Nick Gray</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>
<b>Cameron Evans</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>
<b>Alan Langley</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>
<b>Len Lyon</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>
<b>Dick Engebretson</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>
<b>Bob Morford</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>
<b>Donald Smith</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Pat Dugan</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Judy Dahlstrom</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Toni Kemp</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Harold Menzel</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Gary Neal</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>