

**2014 Desert Classic**  
**Mission Hills Country Club**  
**21-25 January 2014**

Thirty-one hopeful croquet players gathered in Rancho Mirage to compete in the annual Association Rules purse tournament, the Desert Classic. The dry winter meant the mountains lacked their usual snowy highlights, but most players from the North enjoyed the mild weather and the chance to wear shorts. Play was divided into three flights each with sizable prizes for the top three finishers.

After a disappointing MacRobertson Shield effort, Ben Rothman returned to Mission Hills with great admiration for the magnificent lawns. The defending champion was able to triple in each of his six block games and claim the top seed in the knockout. Ben only missed one game in the block and that was due to illness. Despite contracting a 24-hour bug, Mike Orgill finished all but two of his block games in his former winter home. Recent Solomon team member Mike Taylor grabbed the second seed in the block with a triple against rookie Tim Hanks . Former Carter team members Wayne Davies and Jim Butts also made it out of the block by holding back the hard charging Eric Sawyer who refused to play in the consolation event.

In the second of two championship blocks, Steve Mossbrook began his tournament with his first triple peel; an impressive feat against fellow Mission Hills member Leo Nikora. Leo was unable to make the eight player knockout despite an impressive upset against recent Solomon Team member, Stuart Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence responded with four triples in block play, including one against Brian Cumming which secured the block win. Brian also had four triples, but a loss to the great foe from Idaho, Peter Bach, distanced him from Stuart. The big surprise in the block was Jim Hanks (father of the aforementioned Tim) who defeated Leo, Peter and former U. S. A. team member Rhys Thomas on his way to the eight player knockout ladder.

In the challenger flight, local players Nick Gray and Cameron Evans each managed to peg out in block games. Cameron managed to win six out of seven games to claim the top seed and his only loss was to club president Mary Rodeberg who took second in the block. The top four players were given a life in both the draw and process ladders while others were in sudden death. Cameron continued to run all around breaks to win 26-7 against Donna Dixon and 25-16 against Mark Edmunds. Mary Rodeberg kept control and edged out Nick Gray 10-9 and Jean Engebretson 12-4 to set up two finals against Cameron (which became a best-of-three match) for the \$450 purse. With the ladders becoming a two player tea party, there needed to be a four player ladder to determine third place.

The local mallet maker Bob Morford showed that his level of precision and expertise extends beyond his wood shop by sweeping through block play undefeated and taking the top seed in the Competitor Knockout. Veteran player Judy Dahlstrom and the sharp shooting Pat Dugan lagged just behind and tied for second with four wins. Six out of the seven players made it into the knockout, but the top seeds held up in the single elimination ladder. Richard Wright of Phoenix worked his way into the third place match against Patrick, but he could not spread his leaves out far enough to inspire many misses. Patrick's clutch shooting more than compensated for his tactical inexperience in his \$50 third place victory. Judy Dahlstrom is known to peak late in most tournaments, but she had a lot of ground to makeup after losing to Bob 23-5 in block play. While Bob had control for much of the game, Judy was able to hit in just when he had the breaks set up and Bob didn't fully capitalize on the few breaks he built. Despite a perfect record going into the final day, Bob took second and Judy claimed the \$125 check as the Competitor Flight winner.



*Ben Rothman (Tournament Director), Judy Dahlstrom (Competitor Flight winner), Mary Rodeberg (Tournament Manager)*

In the Challenger playoffs, the sixth seed Nick Gray made the most of his rebirth in the impromptu third place ladder. Nick defeated the three-seed Donna Dixon, four-seed Jean Engebretson and the five-seed Mark Edmunds to prove convincingly that he deserved the \$200 third place check. Mary could keep Nick at bay in the playoffs, but his frequent doubles partner Cameron Evans was another matter. The final match up was a showcase of two nearly opposite styles of play. Mary is known for her shrewd tactics and willingness to retreat from risky shots while Cam is a “shoot first, ask questions later” break player. Mary was able to take a game away in last turns and to stay close enough that she nearly took the match, but Cameron's relentless break play proved exactly \$100 better in the end.



*Ben Rothman (Tournament Director), Cameron Evans (Challenger Flight winner), Mary Rodeberg (Tournament Manager)*

Championship flight featured a small plate round robin before the single elimination ladder for players to “fill the gaps” and play those they had yet to play. Young Tim Hanks, who plays for the Northern California Berserkers, took the number one seed and lots of momentum into his first elimination game. Giant-killer Russell Uhler of Vancouver fell victim to a spectacular triple peel. With only two hoops left Tim completed his peel of the penultimate hoop, on what is called a “straight double peel”. Tim was unable to rush very close to rover so he attempted the peel from over 5 yards and only managed to jaws his partner ball. Tim then pulled off one of the most difficult peel shots, the drag jump, in which he jumped his ball enough in the air to hit both balls through the rover hoop from over 3 feet away! With the difficult part over, Tim loosened up only to rush his partner directly at the rover hoop. Luckily the ball bounced away and Tim was able to finish with a 6 yard peg out for his first triple peel. Leo Nikora earned a spot against Tim in the final with a 24-10 victory over the other British Columbian Brian Wasylyk. Leo stepped up his game for the plate final and kept Tim on the sidelines with a 26-0 victory worth \$200.



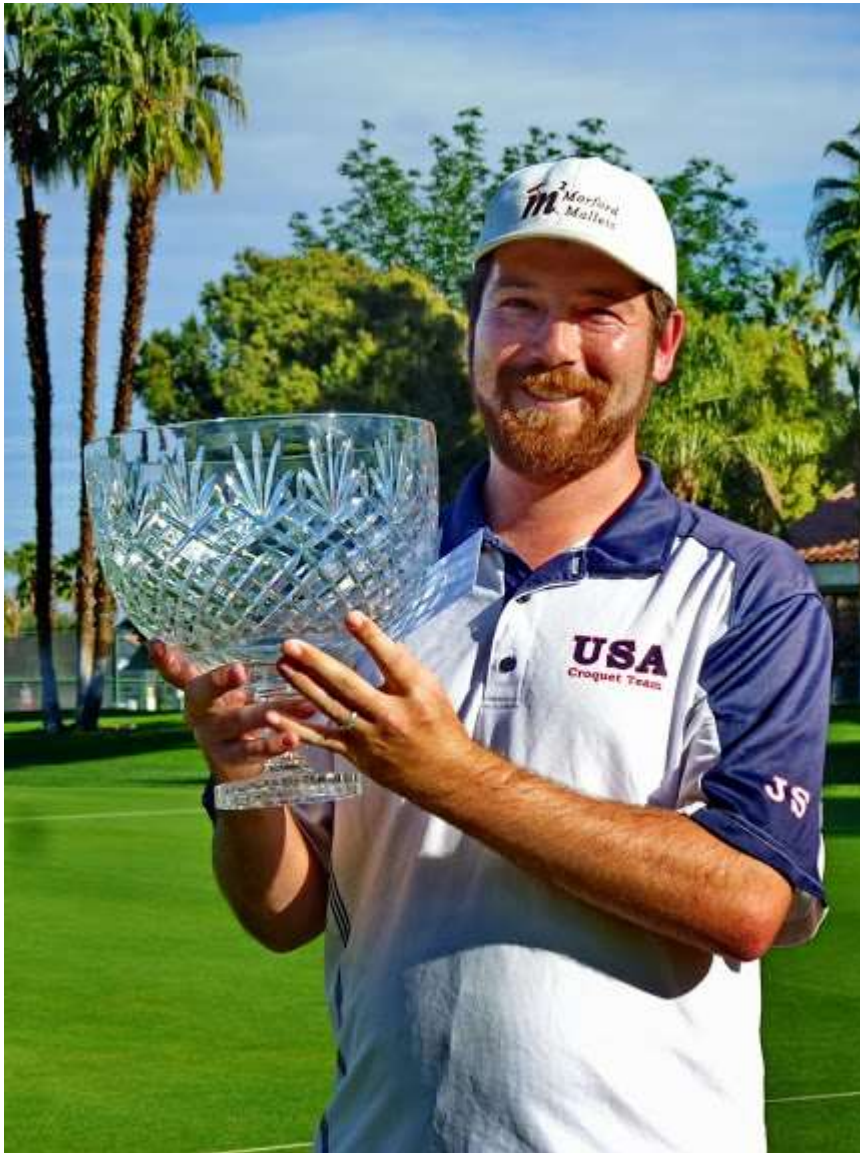
*Ben Rothman (Tournament Director), Leo Nikora (Plate winner), Mary Rodeberg (Tournament Manager)*

The Championship main event was a best-of-three ladder which proved its value in three different come back matches. Ben Rothman stayed a step ahead by tripling twice against Jim Hanks and kept his streak alive. Brian Cumming started out strong, winning his first game 26-0 and getting all three peels in his second game when disaster struck. Brian failed to make a hampered shot after finishing the straight rover peel and that opened up the door (just a crack) for Wayne Davies. The former court tennis world champion was unfazed by the pressure of having his opponent so close to victory. Wayne ran his breaks and finished the game efficiently 26-24 with a triple peel. Brian had his chances in game three, but when he put down his second break, Wayne was able pick up another triple peel to finish (-26, +24tp, +14tp) a stupendous comeback.

Mike Taylor and Stuart Lawrence progressed to the semifinal in 2 games each. Game one was a marathon with Mike pegging out Stuart's ball to win by the narrowest margin 26-25. Stuart came back and showed his resilience with a 26-9 and 26-0 tp for a spot in the final. Ben continued his dominance in the semifinal with two more triples; refusing to give Wayne many opportunities. Mr. Davies kept his comeback hopes alive and despite losing game one, he took the \$500 third place prize from Mike Taylor (-12, +5, +24).

The Championship final pitted the two block winners and top triple peelers head to head in a best-of-three for the better share of \$2,600. Stuart's five triple peels and ability to beat higher seeded Brian Cumming made him the best bet to stop Rothman's streak, but he would need to get control of

the balls. Ben hit in on the fourth turn of game one and gave Stuart one hoop on his way around in order to set a tougher diagonal spread leave. When Stuart missed the hit-in, a line formed at the bar. Rothman finished the game on the sixth turn and then turned on the afterburner. Before spectators had a chance to get another round Ben finished game two, this time on the fifth turn. Ben Rothman not only won the tournament with a perfect 12-0 record, but he completed 12 triple peels while earning the \$1,800 top prize in his sixth consecutive Desert Classic victory.



*Ben Rothman (Championship Flight winner) with the Foroughi Trophy*

See more pictures in the [2014 Desert Classic](#) album.

<https://picasaweb.google.com/116136227812963188841/2014DesertClassic>

### CHAMPION FLIGHT SINGLES

NAME	PLACE	
<b>Ben Rothman</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	\$1,800.00
<b>Stuart Lawrence</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	\$800.00
<b>Wayne Davies</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	\$500.00
<b>Mike Taylor</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Brian Cumming</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Peter Bach</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Jim Butts</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Jim Hanks</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Leo Nikora</b>	<b>Plate Winner</b>	\$200.00
<b>Tim Hanks</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Russell Uhler</b>	<b>T-11<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Brian Wasylyk</b>	<b>T-11<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Steve Mossbrook</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Eric Sawyer</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Rhys Thomas</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Mike Orgill</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup></b>	

### FIRST FLIGHT SINGLES

NAME	PLACE	
<b>Cameron Evans</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	\$450.00
<b>Mary Rodeberg</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	\$350.00
<b>Nick Gray</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	\$200.00
<b>Mark Edmunds</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Donna Dixon</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Jean Engebretson</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Jim Collins</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Dick Engebretson</b>	<b>T-7<sup>th</sup></b>	

## SECOND FLIGHT SINGLES

NAME

PLACE

<b>Judy Dahlstrom</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	\$125.00
<b>Bob Morford</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	\$75.00
<b>Pat Dugan</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	\$50.00
<b>Richard Wright</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Toni Kemp</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Bill Fraser</b>	<b>T-5<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Gary Neal</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	