



USCA National Championships

October 5-11, 2014

West Palm Beach, FL



A good turnout of forty-eight players converged on West Palm Beach, Florida for the 38th USCA National Championships at the National Croquet Center. Included in the field were ten former national champions, led by defending singles and doubles champion, Jeff Soo with 5 singles and 5 doubles titles to his name.

Competition took place in three singles flights and two doubles flights. Championship Singles was broken down into four blocks of eight players, with the top 16 players advancing to a double elimination face-off ladder culminating in a best of three finals. Nine players played a single round robin block in First Flight Singles with four players proceeding on to a double elimination ladder, while in Second Flight Singles, seven players competed in a single round robin block with all seven players advancing to a modified double elimination ladder (the top four records receiving a double life and the remaining three having only a single life).

Championship Doubles was comprised of three blocks of six teams each with the best eight teams moving on to a double elimination ladders. The combined First and Second Flight Doubles matched five teams against each other in a single block with the top four advancing to a double elimination ladder.

With all games timed at 90 minutes, there was plenty of play to be had during the first three days of block play, which took place on 10 courts each day. In all, 235 games were completed during the first three days of competition.

The lawns were fast and in good shape throughout the tournament, thanks to the hard work of Bill Mead and his crew. The hoops were not overly difficult, but still tight enough to cause numerous errors. In Championship Flight Singles, 54% of the games were won by a score of 26 points and 13% were either 26-2 or 26-1 (more about that later). As might be expected, those percentages in Championship Flight Doubles were significantly less, at 27% and 3%, respectively.

John Blamire of the NCC won the First Flight Singles block with 6 wins, followed by Mary Rodeberg, Gary Bennett, Ian Harshman and Cynnne Cagney, all with 5 wins. Unfortunately for Cagney, she drew the short straw based upon net points and did not advance to the ladder. In ladder play, John won two straight to advance to the finals. He was met there by Mary Rodeberg from Mission Hills Croquet Club, who worked her way through the losers' bracket. Blamire won the match by a score of 26-15 to become the National First Flight Singles champion.

In Second Flight Singles, Harry Lloyd chalked up six wins to take first place in the block. Antonia Marmo, Mike Kline and Danna Honeycutt secured the remaining double life slots in the ladder with 5 wins each. Lloyd lost to Huneycutt in the first round of the ladder to fall to the losers' bracket, while Marmo advanced to the finals, beating Kline and Huneycutt. However, Kline gained his revenge by progressing through the losers' bracket to face Marmo in the finals. Kline won the first match, but much to the chagrin

of both players, a second match was required since this was a true double elimination. Kline won the second match as well to win the National Second Flight Singles Championship.

Cynn timer Cagney and John Blamire were the favored team in the First and Second Flight combined doubles, but they faced strong competition from the teams of Mary Rodeberg and Don Smith and Antonia Marmo and Carla Rueck. All three teams finished the block play with three wins, with Cynn timer and John securing the first seed based upon net points. Bill Trower and Harry Lloyd snuck out in fourth place to grab the last playoff spot with one win. As expected, Cagney and Blamire won both games in the winners' bracket to secure a spot in the finals while Trower and Lloyd woke up after losing their first game to win the next two and trip to the finals. However, Team Cagney/Blamire was too strong and won the match and the championship.

Block play in Championship Flight Doubles yielded some upsets. The top seeded team of Brian Cumming and Derek Wassink could manage only two wins and failed to advance. Three time champions Doug Grimsley and Rich Curtis experienced the same outcome, courtesy of last turn hit in on a line ball by Johnny Mitchell. Even the defending champions, Jeff Soo and Rich Lamm struggled with a 3-2 record. In the end, none of the top seeds won their block. Danny Huneycutt and Harper Peterson grabbed the top seed in the playoffs with the only undefeated record. The other block winners were Leo McBride and Bob Van Tassell and Britt Ruby and Rick Sheely. Completing the ladder were Paul and Gary Bennett, Ben Rothman and Johnny Mitchell, the surprising team of Stephen Morgan and Ian Harshman, Soo and Lamm, and George Cochran and Joe Yoder.

Huneycutt and Peterson defeated Cochran/Yoder and Rothman/Mitchell to advance to the finals of the winners bracket to meet Soo and Lamm who knocked off McBride/Van Tassell and Morgan/Harshman. Meanwhile, McBride and Van Tassell began a long march through the losers bracket with close matches to dispatch Ruby/Sheely, Rothman/Mitchell and Morgan/Harsman along the way. In a relatively easy match, Soo and Lamm dropped Huneycutt and Peterson to the losers bracket to face McBride and Van Tassell. McBride and Van Tassell continued their consistent play with a win to gain a spot in the finals and a rematch against Soo and Lamm.

Since they were undefeated, Soo and Lamm needed only to win one of two games in the finals. Soo and McBride both elected not to come into the game, while Van Tassell advanced his ball to the fourth wicket. Perhaps determining that allowing Van Tassell to progress was not a winning strategy, Soo came in, as did McBride. With Soo and Lamm joined in the third corner and Lamm for three, McBride attempted an attack, but rolled out, leaving Lamm an easy break. Lamm ran the break to three-back but was unable to pick up Van Tassell's ball in the first corner after making two-back. Following a long return roquet after two-back and a difficult split shot, Lamm elected to retire. What followed was a game of cat and mouse with Soo and Lamm joined in the third corner and McBride and Van Tassell joined on the west boundary with both Soo and McBride for the second wicket. Eventually, Soo attacked for himself and ran a break before failing a wicket at two-back. Van Tassell couldn't make anything out of the following turn, despite having four balls on the lawn and Soo and Lamm eventually won their second consecutive National Doubles Championship 24-5.

Except for the absence of three time winner Paul Scott, every other National Singles Champion from 1999 on was in the field, along with the 1997 winner, Britt Ruby, making for stiff competition in Championship Flight Singles block play. Top seed, Ben Rothman got off to a strong start on the first day with two 26-1 wins (known as a half Spooner) and almost a third against Harper Peterson, but for an angled 18 foot hoop shot that was made by Peterson. Rothman went on to a 6-1 record with a loss to Leo McBride. None of the top seeds were undefeated with Danny Huneycutt suffering a loss and Jeff Soo and Derek Wassink each losing two. The only undefeated player in block play was Doug Grimsley. In the end, all of the top sixteen seeds moved on to the ladder with two exceptions-Johnny Mitchell and Johnny Osborn. The one notable surprise (except perhaps to himself) was Stephen Morgan, who beat both Mitchell and Osborn and lost only to Huneycutt in the block to grab the fifth seed in the playoff ladder.

The seeding order for the ladder was Grimsley, Rothman, Huneycutt, Brian Cumming, Morgan, McBride, Soo, Sherif Abdelwahab, Wassink, Paul Bennett, Lamm, Ruby, Rich Curtis, George Cochran, Mike Todorovich and Peter Just. A draw and process plate event was available for those that didn't make the playoff ladder. Harper Peterson won both the draw and the process to win the plate event.

In his side of the ladder, Grimsley beat Just and Abdelwahab to set up a match against Stephen Morgan who continued to play with remarkable poise and accurate hoop shooting to get by both Ruby and Cochran. Morgan gave Grimsley all he could handle, but in the end, Grimsley prevailed 15-13. On the other side of the ladder, Huneycutt dispatched Curtis and then Lamm, while Rothman defeated Todorovich

and Bennett (who had sent Soo to losers bracket). In the much awaited matchup between Rothman and Huneycutt, Rothman won easily 26-3.

On one side of the losers bracket, Cochran played well to win two matches and a chance to meet Huneycutt in the finals of that losers bracket with the winner having to win two games against Grimsley. On the other side, Bennett also won twice and advanced to play Stephen Morgan. The winner of that match would play Rothman. Huneycutt bested Cochran 26-2, while Bennett prevailed over Morgan 23-15. Both Grimsley and Rothman continued their undefeated play with Grimsley winning 26-14 over Huneycutt and Rothman winning by a score of 26-2 over Bennett.

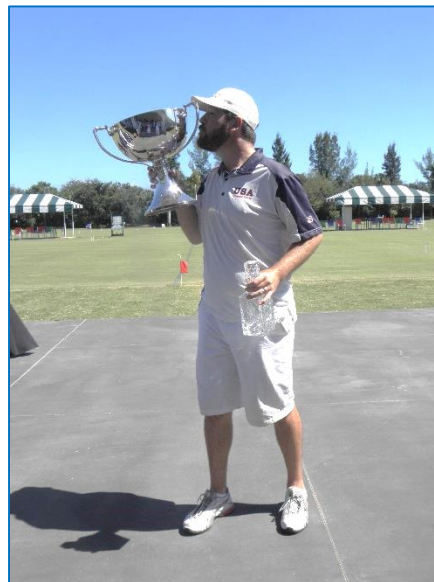
This set up the best of three finals between the two players who had clearly been the best throughout the tournament. Grimsley was undefeated and playing in his second consecutive finals match, while Rothman had suffered only one loss in block play, but in his other games had never allowed an opponent more than four wickets. In the first game, Grimsley wisely elected to remain out of the game with black and wait for a possible mistake by Rothman. Rothman advanced yellow, but failed the fifth hoop off a rush on red, giving Grimsley an opportunity with blue who was in the second corner. He capitalized with a long distance roquet on red, which he destroyed toward the south boundary line while rush peeling yellow and leaving yellow northwest of hoop two and blue in the hoop. Rothman elected to shoot at blue, but missed, giving Grimsley an easy pickup after two and a relatively easy four-ball break with black. Unfortunately, Grimsley stuffed three with black and although Rothman missed with yellow, he ultimately got the innings and after a croquet out into the third corner, ran two breaks around to finish 26-5. In the second game, Grimsley elected to bring both balls in and had a chance to attack, but could not execute it. Rothman made no mistakes this time and won 26-2 to capture his third National Singles Championship.

~Richard G. Curtis, Co-Tournament Director

Championship Flight Singles

1. Ben Rothman
2. Doug Grimsley
3. Danny Huneycutt
Stephen Morgan
5. George Cochran
Paul Bennett
7. Britt Ruby
Jeff Soo
9. Peter Just
Sherif Abdelwahab
Rich Curtis
Rich Lamm
13. Derek Wassink
Brian Cumming
Leo McBride
Mike Todorovich
17. John Osborn
18. Doug Moore
19. Harper Peterson
20. Bob Van Tassell
21. Bill Mead
22. Ted Quimby
23. Rick Sheely
24. Joe Yoder
25. Hans Peterson
26. Randy Cardo
27. David McCoy
28. Johnny Mitchell
29. Rich Schiller
30. Steve Johnston
31. Dave Cohen
32. Vincent Marmo

Ben Rothman



Championship Flight Doubles

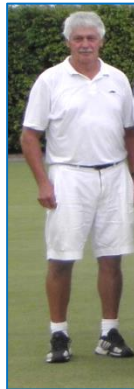
1. Jeff Soo/Rich Lamm
2. Leo McBride/Bob Van Tassell
3. Danny Huneycutt/Harper Peterson
4. Stephen Morgan/Ian Harshman
5. Paul Bennett/Gary Bennett
Ben Rothman/Johnny Mitchell
7. George Cochran/Joe Yoder
Britt Ruby/Rick Sheely
9. Sherif Abdelwahab/Sandy Knuth Walsh
10. Derek Wassink/Brian Cumming
11. Doug Grimsley/Rich Curtis
12. John Osborn/Doug Moore
13. David McCoy/Bill Mead
14. Peter Just/Mike Todorovich
15. Dave Cohen/Rich Schiller
16. Steve Johnston/Ted Quimby
17. Hans Peterson/Randy Cardo
18. Vincent Marmo/Dick Scherf



Johnny Mitchell, Rich Lamm, Jeff Soo

Championship Flight Plate

1. Harper Peterson
2. Ted Quimby
Joe Yoder
4. Steve Johnston
Rich Schiller
Doug Moore
7. Randy Cardo
Bill Mead
9. Dave Cohen
Vincent Marmo



Harper Peterson

First Flight Singles

1. John Blamire
2. Mary Rodeberg
3. Gary Bennett
4. Ian Harshman
5. Cynnne Cagney
6. Don Smith
7. Bill Trower
8. Dick Scherf
9. Sandy Knuth Walsh

John Blamire
Johnny Mitchell



Second Flight Singles

1. Mike Kline
2. Antonia Marmo
3. Danna Huneycutt
4. Harry Lloyd
5. Gerald Shugar
Carla Rueck
7. Peter Bell



Mike Kline
Johnny Mitchell

- First and Second Flight Doubles
1. Cynn timer Cagney/John Blamire
 2. Bill Trower/Harry Lloyd
 3. Antonia Marmo/Carla Rueck
 4. Mary Rodeberg/Don Smith
 5. Mike Kline/Gerald Shugar

The Ladies

Sandra Knuth Walsh
Danna Huneycutt
Cynn timer Cagney
Antonia Marmo
Carla Rueck
Mary Rodeberg

