

Selection 8s October 23-26, 2014 West Palm Beach, FL



In the beginning, Jerry Stark created the Selection 8s. It was Jerry's idea to create a yearly tournament to bring together the top American players for an intense, 4 day, no frills, slugfest---in theory to provide the USCA Selection Committee with the needed information to pick US teams for international events. The Selection 8s still serve that purpose, but over recent years, the popularity of Association croquet, and the appeal of a low cost tournament featuring dawn to dusk croquet, has turned the "Eights" into one of the best attended contests of the year. The 2014 edition filled all 12 lawns of the NCC with a capacity crowd of enthusiastic players.

As always, the featured 1st Eight attracts the most attention, and this year was no exception. Top ranked US player, Ben Rothman put up a very strong 11 wins out of the 14 games played, but he was edged out in the competition by a red-hot Jeff Soo. Soo, playing some of the best croquet of his highly successful career, registered 12 wins in one of the most impressive showings in years in the top Eight. Soo's only losses came as he split two games each against Rothman and Brian Cumming. Rothman fell to Soo, third place finisher David Maloof, and Doug Grimsley. Maloof was followed in the standings by Danny Huneycutt, Grimsley, Cumming, Jim Bast and Stuart Lawrence.

The strong 2nd Eight was won by Leo McBride with an 11-3 record, followed by the player everyone was waiting to see—Danny Huneycutt protégé, 15 year old Matthew Essick from North Carolina. Matthew finished with a 10-4 record against stiff competition and recorded 3 triples along the way. The second Eight had 14 triples overall (McBride led the way with 6). By comparison, the 1st Eight had 27 triples (9 by Rothman). The rest of the 2nd Eight ended in this order: Bob Kroeger, Colin Irwin, Robert Hurst, Peter Bach, Sherif Abdelwahab, and Chris Percival-Smith.

Another up and coming young player, Stephen Morgan, came close to sweeping the 3rd Eight with 13 wins and just 1 loss, which stood up as the best record of any winner of the 6 different groups of eight players.. His lone defeat was at the hands of Mike Taylor who beat Morgan with one of his two triples of the tournament (the only two credited to the 3rd Eight). After Morgan and Taylor, the order of finish was Mike Todovich, George Cochran, Alan Cottle, Peter Just, Paul Emmitt, and Martyn Selman.

Matt Smith and Tom Yeats tied at the top of the 4th Eight with identical 10-4 records including a split in their two games against each other. They were trailed by Jon Essick (more famous as young Matthew's father, but who did score the only triple of the 4th Eight), Johnny Osborn, Simon Jenkins, Harper Peterson, Tim Rapuano, and Ed O'Laughlin.

The 5th Eight was dominated by NCC pro Bill Mead with a record of 12-2. Billy Bob Breeden finished second at 9-5, followed by newcomer Ian Harshman (8-6), Steve Summer, Bob Roth, Richard Schiller, Bill Hartmann, and Dick Sullivan. Mead's only losses came at the hands of Steve Summer and Billy Bob Breeden.

A couple of late drop outs reduced the 6th Eight to 6 players, but after a double round robin the remaining players dropped into a seeded playoff to keep the games going through Sunday afternoon. Dan Pailas dominated the proceedings with an overall 9-2 record and undoubtedly earned a promotion for next year's tournament. Bill Daigle, Rodney Lassiter, Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli, Dawn Jupin, and Russell Dilley filled out a closely packed field behind Pailas.

Danny Huneycutt served as (unpaid) tournament director with assistance from many of the players, especially for hoop setting each morning. Martyn Selman was Tournament Referee. Due to the bare-bones approach of the tournament a significant portion of each entry fee was able to be donated to the Lee Olsen Fund for use in funding travel expenses for US team events.

First 8

1. Jeff Soo
2. Ben Rothman
3. David Maloof
4. Danny Huneycutt
5. Doug Grimsley
6. Brian Cumming
7. Stuart Lawrence
7. Jim Bast



Ben Rothman, Danny Huneycutt, Brian Cumming, Jeff Soo, Stuart Lawrence, David Maloof, Doug Grimsley, Jim Bast

Second 8

1. Leo McBride
2. Matthew Essick
3. Bob Kroeger
4. Colin Irwin
4. Robert Hurst
4. Peter Bach
7. Sherif Abdelwahab
8. Chris Percival-Smith



Leo McBride, Sherif Abdelwahab, Bob Kroeger, Chris Percival-Smith, Peter Bach, Matthew Essick, Robert Hurst

Third 8

1. Stephan Morgan
2. Mike Taylor
3. Mike Todorovich
4. George Cochran
5. Alan Cottle
6. Peter Just
7. Paul Emmett
7. Martyn Selman



Alan Cottle, Mike Todorovich, Paul Emmett, Stephan Morgan, Mike Taylor, Martyn Selman, George Cochran

Fourth 8

1. Matt Smith
1. Tom Yates
3. Jon Essick
4. John Osborn
4. Simon Jenkins
6. Harper Peterson
7. Tim Rapuano
8. Ed O'Laughlin



Tim Rapuano Tom Yates, Simon Jenkins, Matt Smith, Jon Essick, John Osborn, Ed O'Laughlin

Fifth 8

1. Bill Mead
2. Billy Bob Breeden
3. Ian Harshman
4. Steve Summer
4. Bob Roth
6. Richard Schiller
6. Bill Hartmann
8. Dick Sullivan



Bill Mead, Steve Summer, Bob Roth, Dick Sullivan, Ian Harshman, Bill Hartmann, Billy Bob Breeden, Richard Schiller

Sixth Group

1. Dan Pailas
2. Bill Daigle
2. Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli
2. Rodney Lassiter
5. Dawn Jupin
6. Russell Dilley



Rodney Lassiter, Russell Dilley, Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli, Dawn Jupin, Dan Pailas, Bill Daigle