

2014 USCA SENIORS MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS
November 12-16, 2014
West Palm Beach, FL



I'm pretty certain that almost everyone has heard the term: expect the unexpected. You may have even stumbled onto this phrase within a fortune cookie. Or, perhaps, heard it from of an inebriated pilot. One way or another, it's one of those many phrases which I think would fit well upon a white T-shirt; one I would happily wear while running a croquet tournament. Sure, what might have been a Seniors Masters record setting number of 75 participants caught me off guard. Five days of perhaps the best weather ever for any croquet tournament was almost beyond comprehension. But I dealt with both of these anomalies. You know...deep breaths and counting to ten. The unexpected I did not expect was the crying. Lots of it. All coming from one player situated and hiding behind me in the small corner of the National Croquet Center's south veranda, a portion of real estate I had claimed for my own. But we'll get back to that later.

The Seniors Masters Championships is one of my favorite events to direct. Yes, I usually comment upon how many of the players are prone toward losing track of their mallets, but most of the participants are, for the most part, experienced. They understand that I do my best to offer the maximum amount of play without exhausting everyone and that this occurs only if the schedule of game times is respected. The field plays with heart, relaxes with spirit and truly enjoys a competition without a 16-year old, one whose handicap is way far from correct. Six rounds of matches were played almost every day, starting at 8 AM and ending around 5:30, darkness lurking but moments away. And everyone was great with this, reporting scores without hesitation and respecting others within the competition.

Despite that having been said, this five day event does, at one point in time, become one of endurance. In a rarity, almost all of the players who made the Singles Playoffs did not also secure a Doubles Playoff berth. This was good news, at least for me. Most everyone played on Sunday, with Vincent Marmo

the only survivor to face four long matches. Things ran smoothly and the trophies were spread amongst twenty-one different players.



Peter Just

In the Championship Flight Seniors (60-69) Singles, Peter Just (-1.5) overcame Bill (“Mr. Upset”) Hartmann (1) with an 18-13 victory in one Semi-Final while Dick Brackett (-1.5) snuck past (14-12) undefeated Leo McBride (-2.5) in the other. This set up for an interesting Final between two unpredictable players. In a scrappy match, Just would prevail with a 16-11 score. Fred Jones (-1), in his 17th year in the Championship Masters Division, withstood a late charge from Alan Cottle (-1.5) in a Finals match (16-14) which never saw a commanding lead by either player. David Ekstrom (-1) and Mike Gibbons (-2) settled for a tie for Third Place.



Fred Jones



Scott Spradling

While First Flight Seniors Singles was the smallest group upon the charts, it may well have been the most competitive. Until the Finals, Scott Spradling's (5) only loss had come to the hands of the hard-charging Stephanie Robertson (6). And wouldn't you almost expect that they would meet again in the championship match, this time with Spradling taking revenge while Ron Millican (6) and Kevin McQuigg (5) lingered in Third Place positions. Vincent Marmo (4), in the Masters Division, found just enough energy to fight off Russ Dilley (5) in an exciting 13-12 Finals. Richard Palmer (5) and Bob Sasser (5), Doubles partners, somewhat fittingly tied for Third. Bryon Lee (10) looked classy throughout the entire affair and defeated spunky Carla Rueck (9) (16-13) to capture the combined Second Flight Singles.



Vincent Marmo

The three Flights of Doubles were probably where the most interesting and spectator friendly matches occurred. In the Championship Flight, even Bob Van Tassell - Bob Chilton seemed surprised with their 14-13 Finals victory over Dick Sullivan – Michael Todorovich. It truly was a Flight in which anything could have happened, with low scoring and tight matches being the norm. The team of the reliable Fred and Jackie Jones, combined with the “Spectators Choice for Something Really Unique to Happen” duo of Leo McBride – Johnny Mitchell, finished Third. Both Richard Palmer and Bob Sasser came into the First Flight Doubles without partners, but the match-up worked well as they defeated Vincent Marmo – Joe Zilligen (15-12) in the First Flight. Michael Kline – Hal Denton took Second Flight honors with their victory (15-6) over the surprising team of Charlotte Hapak – Gerald Shugar.



As has always been the case, while this tournament continues to offer competitive play, it also promises and promotes the social nature of croquet. And what a great social event this really has become. Continental breakfasts and wonderful lunches kept everyone well fed. The comfortable lounge allowed everyone the opportunity to take advantage of the afternoon 'nap time' option. The Player's Dinner was well received and for the many players participating in anticipation of the Hall of Fame gala, inducting Erv Peterson and David McCoy, they were not disappointed. Bottom line...a great time was had by all, and sincere thanks go out to Bill Mead and the grounds crew, the wonderful staff at the NCC and, most importantly, the tireless and often thankless work offered from the USCA Office.

And yet there is still one question left to be answered. Given the great weather, the exciting matches and all of the social activities available, why was there suddenly a crying woman lurking behind my back? At first I thought it might be the overly tight wickets offered throughout the week, which won't happen again. Or perhaps she had just forgotten to clear at 1-back, or missed a vital shot, or broke her mallet, or a nail. Whatever it was, trust me when I tell you that the one thing a tournament director does not want to hear or see is a group of crying participants! I also didn't want to, but I had to ask.

As things turn out, she had won a match. No, it was not the National Championships, or a game against Robert Fulford, but a block match on the second day of the event. She was the only 7-handicapper in a Flight in which most of the players were holding handicaps of 5 or below. She was in uncharted territory and had worked hard to improve her game. And she won a match.

I think that most of those in attendance come to this tournament to spend time with friends. Some found that they played better than expected. Some worse, but there was no one not smiling by the time Johnny Mitchell handed out the last trophy. It was a great event, and if they all had a little tear forming, that would have been fine as well.

-John C. Osborn (TD)

FINAL RESULTS

CHAMPIONSHIP SENIORS SINGLES

1. Peter Just
2. Dick Brackett
3. Leo McBride
3. Bill Hartmann
5. Mike Todorovich
5. Johnny Mitchell
5. Jane Simonds
5. David McCoy
9. Bob Van Tassell
9. Guy Brown
11. John Warlick
12. Cynn timer Cagney



Peter Just, Johnny Mitchell

CHAMPIONSHIP MASTERS SINGLES

1. Fred Jones
2. Alan Cottle
3. Mike Gibbons
3. David Ekstrom
5. Steve Johnston
5. Dick Sullivan
5. Bob Chilton
5. Bert Myer
9. Jackie Jones
9. Bill Martin
9. Avril Rangoni Machiavelli
9. Art Parsells
13. Geoffrey Mattison
13. Jack Montgomery
13. Ken Northrop
13. Paula Phaneuf
17. Charlie Smith
17. Patrick Colt
17. Paul Phoenix
20. Dale Poszgai



Fred Jones, Johnny Mitchell

FIRST FLIGHT SENIORS SINGLES

1. Scott Spradling
2. Stephanie Robertson
3. Kevin McQuigg
3. Ron Millican
5. Roni Brazell
5. Dick Scherf
7. Vickie Johnston
8. Ray Liberti

Scott Spradling,
Johnny Mitchell



FIRST FLIGHT MASTERS SINGLES

1. Vincent Marmo
2. Russ Dilley
3. Richard Palmer
3. Bob Sasser
5. Mike Kline
5. Harold Menzel
5. Bob Bozeman
5. Antonia Marmo
9. Martie Ekstrom
9. Lucie Bard
11. Joe Zilligen
11. Howard Holdsclaw
11. Dolores Gallagher
11. Betty Whitlow
11. Betty Crisler
11. Andrée Bothe



Vincent Marmo, Johnny Mitchell

SECOND FLIGHT SINGLES

1. Byron Lee
2. Carla Rueck
3. David Spivey
3. Ann Nolte
5. Linda Harris
5. Deborah Millican
5. Charlotte Hapak
5. Anne Licursi
9. Thomas Tribby
10. Gerald Shugar
10. Mary Shields
12. Hal Denton
12. Lois Holdsclaw
12. Lovejoy Duryea
12. Suzanne Spradling
16. Jeanette Tribby



Byron Lee, Johnny Mitchell

CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Bob Van Tassell-Bob Chilton
2. Dick Sullivan-Michael Todorovich
3. Fred Jones-Jackie Jones
3. Leo McBride-Johnny Mitchell
5. Dale Poszgai-Ken Northrop
5. David Ekstrom-Pat Colt
5. Dick Brackett-John Warlick
5. Peter Just-Bill Martin
9. Steve Johnston-Charlie Smith
9. Mike Gibbons-David McCoy
9. Jane Simonds-Geoffrey Mattison
9. Bill Hartmann-Cynn timer Cagney
9. Alan Cottle-Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli
14. Paula Phaneuf-Bert Myer
15. Jack Montgomery-Paul Phoenix
15. Art Parsells-Dolores Gallagher



Bob Van Tassell, Bob Chilton

FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Bob Sasser-Richard Palmer
2. Vincent Marmo-Joe Zilligen
3. Dick Scherf-Ray Liberti
3. Guy Brown-Howard Holdsclaw
5. Roni Brazell-Stephanie Robertson
5. Betty Whitlow-Betty Crisler
7. Ron McMillan-Harold Menzel
7. Kevin McQuigg-Scott Spradling
7. Bob Bozeman-Andrée Bothe
10. Russell Dilley-Anne Licursi
10. Lucie Bard-Ann Nolte
12. Martie Ekstrom-Carla Rueck



Bob Sasser, Richard Palmer, Johnny Mitchell

SECOND FLIGHT DOUBLES

1. Mike Kline-Hal Denton
2. Charlotte Hapak-Gerald Shugar
3. Deborah Millican-Suzanne Spradling
3. Antonia Marmo-Lois Holdsclaw
5. Lovejoy Duryea-Hildegard Jones
6. Barbara Missett-Eugenia Wilkie

-John C. Osborn (TD)



Mike Kline, Hal Denton