

October 1-2, 2016

New Jersey State Croquet Championship

Green Gables Croquet Club, Sea Girt, NJ



THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIP, NOW IN ITS FOURTH YEAR

While typically played in August, the host venue, Green Gables Croquet Club (near the Jersey Shore), positioned the event in October, to avoid conflicts with their busy season. For better or for worse, the event saw fewer attendees from previous years. While overall a smaller group, nine players ranging from 4.5 to -1.5 handicaps in a single occluded block, had the potential for big surprises and even bigger tracking point gains.

THE WEATHER

Whether good or bad, the weather is always mentioned in croquet tournament reports, and in this case it was on everyone's mind. The long term forecast showed cooling temperatures, high winds and a 50% chance of rain for most of the weekend. As time crept on, it was looking worse and worse with a constant deluge. While all players have rain gear and can prepare for the worst, canceling the event was considered more than a few times. However, with the annual pin and trophies paid for, we strived ahead.

As it turned out there was no actual rain at all, though it was quite wet. We had every form of mist, fog, and dew that never went away. Playing on courts recently ravaged by grub-seeking-skunks and the constant rooster tails (from the dew), participants found additional challenges with the broad range of handicaps.

THE GAMES

Following 4 block matches on the first day, all of the participants convened at the Rugart's (Jodi & Conrad) in Brielle, for a pizza party. The next day started the playoff with the top 8 players. All winners in the quarterfinals went on to the semi finals while all of the losers started the plate event.

The plate final saw visiting veteran John Oehrle (0.5) squeak by local phenom Tim Mullen (4.5) 16-15, for a custom two deck set of playing cards with art by Chris Kaas. We hope Mr. Oehrle will get many converts at his next Bridge tournament! The championship final was equally exciting, which easily could have gone either way. While there were many "rematches" on Sunday, there was one game yet to be played: reigning champion Tom Cooper (-0.5) against tournament founder Timothy Rapuano (-1.5). The last time these two squared off was in the final at the 2015 Mid-Atlantic Regional where Tim nabbed the title. With the Plate Final well underway, Tim stepped onto the court with a mission to get his name on the state's permanent trophy. Tom stepped on for payback and a repeat victory (on his way to the threepeat).

Fast forward to last turn: with a nice five wicket lead, Tim made all the right plays to split up opponents with red, and sets up at 4-back with his partner yellow going for 1-back. Tom makes a crowd-cheering hit-in with black and runs the four ball break through

1-back and 2-back. Post 3-back he has a little trouble hitting the escape ball (red) and has to make a super long shot to pivot (blue) to continue the break. It's a hit and the crowd goes wild! Leaving pivot near the center of the court, Tom takes off and heads back to pick up red near 3-back. But then the split to penultimate goes awry, and he misses the pioneer (yellow) at 4-back. Tim buries yellow, as it's the only ball blue is live on, which it needs to score wicket 5. Tom fails the hit-in, and this year's title goes to Timothy Rapuano, 15-13. It was a very close match, which could have been won by either player.



Given the broad range of handicaps in the group and the fact that nobody went undefeated, there were some other big winners (of tracking points). Ralph Charles piled up 19 tps to drop his handicap to 3.5, Tim Mullen loaded up 12 points, and Justin Berbig topped out with 9 tps, reducing him a 1.5 handicap.

Congratulations to all the winners and all the participants. We had a lot of fun and hope to see everyone next year (in warmer and drier weather)!

FINAL STANDING ORDER

- 1 Timothy Rapuano
- 2 Tom Cooper
- 4 Justin Berbig
- 4 Ralph Charles
- 5 John Oehrle
- 6 Tim Mullen
- 7 Loretta Cooper
- 8 Greg Shaffer
- 9 Jack Montgomery

Tom Cooper, TD
Timothy Rapuano, Manager