

Sarasota County Croquet Club Winter Invitational Tournament 2016
January 28-31, 2016
Venice, Florida

Sarasota County Croquet Club's Winter Invitational tournament was held January 28th through the 31st on three club courts in Venice, Florida. With a final total of 33 players competing, the courts were busy and double banked through the weekend

In the singles only, four-flight tournament, the flight handicap spread was fairly close. Championship flight with handicaps -1.5 to 3.5 with an average of 0.5 demonstrated some fine play for the rest of the players. First flight consisted of 4.5 to 7 handicap players, while second flight had 7 to 10 handicaps, and third flight held 9 to 13 handicap contestants.

The Florida weather, while clear, was not very warm. January tends to bring the worst in the way of temperatures. But, although bundled up against the cold weather, we were still able to consider ourselves lucky, with no rain, nor snow to shovel, while four permanent shelters adjacent to the lawns, added to the comfort of the players.

The croquet lawns were in excellent shape, true, level, and with speed of 8 on a stempt meter. Under the direction of Colin Irwin, the wickets were all set with a close and equal clearance. All set-up and take down of the courts, as well as the food service and attitude adjustment is organized and handled by club volunteers.

At the opening party, players and their guests normally are able to watch the sun set over the Gulf of Mexico on the beach at the Manasota Beach Club in Englewood. This year rain and fog prevented this. With a cocktail hour preceding a private five-course dinner at the club, a great evening capped off the social side of the tournament.

Saturday evening was combined with the monthly potluck dinner normally held by the club. Included were cocktails and a full buffet dinner for seventy-seven members and players, with never ending desserts.

In Championship flight Alan Cottle dominated the block as well as the single elimination ladder. In block play, undefeated, amassing 128 points out of a possible 130 (4 peg outs and a 24) seeded him #1 in the ladder. Two games in the ladder 26 to 4 and 26 to 2 added another 52 points. Up and coming Bob Worrell, entering as a 3.5 amassed 31 tracking points as well as finishing second to Alan. Of interest, in the final game was to watch Alan run a two-ball break for 10 wickets. With all clean wicket shots and always a forward rush to the next wicket, was to see croquet played at it's best. Geoffrey Mattison played extremely well, finishing third in a tie with Colin Irwin.

Eight players in first flight led by Jim Coling who went undefeated in block play with Michael Kline close behind. Third place out of the block was Doug Johnson. In ladder play, the final between Jim Coling and Doug Johnson was not decided until the last ball

in last play had played. In the final round Doug made #2 back to tie, roqueted and took off to 3 back. Jim then rushed to and made 3 back to tie the game again. Doug then made 4 back to go ahead by 1, and Jim attacked cross-court but was not successful in his attempt, losing a great game 16-15. Oakley Johnson and Michael Kline tied for third.

Second flight, the largest flight with 12 players, playing in two blocks of six, saw Mark Masselink and Ted Thelin both undefeated with five wins in their respective blocks. Mark was well on his way to the top when he stumbled and lost to Bob Lentz in the ladder. His run was quickly taken over by Larry Beaton who ran to the finals. In other parts of the ladder Jim McLaughlin overtook Ted in the quarterfinals to meet Larry. The final did show some of the old Jim McLaughlin who took the win easily 15 to 9. Bob Lentz and Ted Thelin tied for third

Third flight with eight players belonged to Michael Kukla all the way. Although not scoring the points that Alan Cottle did, Michael went all the way undefeated, five wins in the block and three in the ladder. Frank LaValla, playing in his first tournament, #2 and Gene Raymond #3 in the block, both played some great games, with Gene edging Frank 12-11 to meet Michael in the finals, but Michael was determined to keep his record clean and won 15-10. Frank LaValla and Elsie Maxam tied for third

This was the second and final invitational for the season. February and March will see the Club Championships in singles and doubles. With a membership close to 200, there is play and competition every day on the courts. If in the area call ahead and join the fun.

The City council of Venice and the County Commissioners of Sarasota County has approved the request of the Croquet club to add two additional courts adjacent to the three existing courts. If the time schedule permits we should have the courts in before the next winter season. The club will fund the majority of the expense.

Championship Flight

- 1-Alan Cottle
- 2- Robert Worrell
- 3-Colin Irwin
- 3-Geoffrey Mattison
- 5-Jack Montgomery

First Flight

- 1-Doug Johnson
- 2-Jim Coling
- 3-Oakley Johnson
- 3-Michael Kline
- 5-Jan Balson
- 5-Dolores Gallagher
- 5-Roni Brazell
- 5-Gary Anderson

Second Flight

- 1-Jim Mclaughlin
- 2-Larry Beaton
- 3-Tedodore Thelin
- 3-Bob Lentz
- 5-Doug Ledgett
- 5-John Mcdermott
- 5-Mark Masselink
- 5-Jeannine Bedard
- 9-Roger Measel
- 9-William Hoffman
- 9-Maryann Mcdermott
- 9-Camelia Monteforte

Third Flight

- 1-Michael Kukla
- 2-Gene Raymond
- 3-Frank Lavalla
- 3-Elsie Maxam
- 5-Connie Coling
- 5-Rob Elwell
- 5-Patricia Cunnington
- 5-Katie Bull

Submitted Fred Jones
Tournament Director