

## 2017 USCA ASSOCIATION LAWS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

National Croquet Club, West Palm Beach, FL

April 2-8, 2017

NAME	PLACE	NAME	PLACE
<b>CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT SINGLES</b>		<b>CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT DOUBLES</b>	
Stephen Morgan	1	Stephen Morgan	1
Jeff Soo	2	Danny Huneycutt	1
Stuart Lawrence	3	Stuart Lawrence	2
Brian Cumming	3	Jeff Soo	2
Chris Patmore	5	Wayne Davies	3
Danny Huneycutt	5	Daniel Pailas	3
Daniel Pailas	5	Mike Taylor	4
Simon Jenkins	5	Simon Jenkins	4
Jim Bast	9	Jim Bast	5
Sherif Abdelwahab	10	Chris Patmore	5
Mike Taylor	10	Brian Cumming	5
Ian Harshman	10	Ian Harshman	5
Peter Bach	13	Peter Bach	5
John Osborn	13	Rick Landry	5
Michael Todorovich	13	Hal Denton	5
Wayne Davies	16	Sherif Abdelwahab	5
<b>SINGLES PLATE</b>			
Daniel Pailas	1		
Sherif Abdelwahab	2		
Wayne Davies	3		
Jim Bast	4		
Michael Todorovich	4		
Mike Taylor	6		
Peter Bach	7		
Ian Harshman	8		
Rick Landry	9		
Danny Huneycutt	9		



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Eighteen players convened at the National Croquet Center to contest the 2017 national championships of Association Croquet over seven days starting April 2. With some top-ranked players unavailable due to the upcoming MacRobertson Shield the field was a little smaller and weaker than usual. But the numbers worked perfectly for the format, with 16 in singles and eight pairs in doubles.

Despite the smaller field and the extra day in the schedule, it was a push to fit all the games in. Tournament Manager Jeff Soo opted for longer time limits, 3:15 for singles block games and 8:00 for best-of-three matches, yet a surprising number of games went to time. Fast lawns, wind, Superhoops, and hills around most hoop positions were enough of a challenge that triple peels were a rarity and errors all too common.

Day 1 had just one successful triple. The top-seeded pair of Stephen Morgan and Danny Huneycutt enjoyed a comfortable win in their doubles quarterfinal, Morgan tripling to win game 2. Morgan and Huneycutt are expected to partner in at least one test match in the MacRobertson Shield, which begins April 18. Another such pairing, Stuart Lawrence and Jeff Soo, were seeded #2 and also won their doubles quarterfinal 2-0.

The other seeded pairs faced more of a challenge. Chris Patmore and Jim Bast lost a scrappy game 1 to the pick-up pairing of Wayne Davies and Daniel Pailas, -9. They reversed the score to level the match. This left relatively little time for the deciding game, which Davies and Pailas won +1 on time.

Brian Cumming and Ian Harshman started well, with Harshman coming close to completing a triple peel in game 1. But opponents Mike Taylor and Simon Jenkins fought back to win game 2, +5. Time running low and both sides failing chances to close out the match, Taylor and Jenkins prevailed +3.

Singles blocks were the order of business for the next two days. The upsets started early, with Huneycutt, Soo, and Lawrence losing to Bast, Pailas, and John Osborn in the day's first round. In the next round it was Pailas over Cumming and Harshman over Sherif Abdelwahab. With the trend of long games continuing, the scheduled fourth round didn't even get started. But even with only three rounds played, every player had at least one loss.

The top players started finishing games more quickly by day 3, but there were still just three rounds completed that day, and all but two players still had one more block game to play. Extra time had been scheduled in case block tiebreak rounds were needed, which now seemed all but certain.

At the start of day 4, in Block A Lawrence and Morgan led on five wins and were assured of spots in the Knockout. Patmore, on four wins, was assured of at least a playoff for fourth place, and could guarantee a KO spot by winning his final block game. Four other players were also still in contention for that fourth-place spot. Patmore, Bast, and Huneycutt all won, putting Patmore in the KO and the other two into a playoff for fourth. In this game, Huneycutt had all the early play and was set for an easy win, but after pegging out his partner ball he missed the peg with the striker's ball. Bast made an excellent comeback, but eventually left Huneycutt a free half-court shot, which he hit to close out the game.

In Block B, Soo was assured of a KO spot on five wins. Cumming and Pailas had four wins each, and each could guarantee a playoff spot with another win. Abdelwahab, Taylor, and Harshman were each on three wins, and Jenkins was the dark horse on two wins. Abdelwahab had already finished his block games; when Cumming beat Taylor and Jenkins beat Harshman, the surprising result was a four-way tie for fourth place. Jenkins, who had started the block 0-4, won both his games to advance to the KO.

The doubles semi-finals had also been scheduled for day 4; Jenkins's run through the singles meant that his doubles match didn't start till late in the day. Huneycutt and Morgan won the first game +17. The players continued the match but had to peg down partway through game 2. The other semi-final started right after lunch, Lawrence and Soo advancing in straight games over Davies and Pailas, including a triple peel by Lawrence in game 1.

Singles was again the main order of business for day 5, the KO quarterfinals and the Plate starting first thing. Bast and Davies set the pace in the Plate, finishing the day undefeated. The quarterfinals in the bottom half of the draw shared a lawn, and both matches finished 2-0, Soo beating Huneycutt and Lawrence beating Pailas. The other quarterfinals went the distance. Cumming had a quick +26tp to open against Patmore, and advanced to peg and 4-back in game 2. But Patmore hit and went round to peg out Cumming's rover ball, then played a careful tactical end-game to level the match with a +1 win. Cumming won the decider, +16. Morgan vs. Jenkins

was scrappier, both players having multiple chances to put the match away in game 3. Jenkins put the pressure on by advancing one ball to the peg early; a very relieved Morgan finally won, +11.

Again this left little time for the remaining doubles semi-final. The players resumed the match for another hour or so, but once again it was pegged down in game 2. The match resumed again first thing on day 6. The manager's worries continued as Jenkins and Taylor seemed likely to level the match. But an error allowed Huneycutt and Morgan to close out the game +3.

Morgan made a quick start to his semi-final against Cumming, +26tp. Cumming had chances in game 2 but Morgan won +7. Earlier, Soo had beaten Lawrence +18, +17. With Soo and Morgan playing in both finals, the Manager decided to start the doubles final right away. Or nearly so: while popping out for lunch, Lawrence had the bad luck to be involved in a car accident, through no fault of his own. Fortunately there were no injuries, so after a delay of an hour or so it was on to the doubles final. Despite Soo's starting the match with errors on four successive turns, he and Lawrence won game 1 +18. Game 2 was pegged down, both sides with a clip on 4-back.

In the Plate, four players ended the day in contention: Bast, Davies, Pailas, and Michael Todorovich. (Davies was also in the mix, but was not available to play the final day.)

On day 7, Abdelwahab and Pailas won to move into the lead. Their subsequent match was the Plate final, and Pailas won with a delayed triple peel, only his second career triple.

Huneycutt and Morgan leveled the doubles final +17. Game 3 had its share of errors; after one of these there were three clips on 4-back and one on penult. Soo played the penult ball and scored his final two hoops, but failed to contrive a proper "tea-lady" leave. Morgan hit the twenty-yarder and went round, then pegged out Soo's ball. The three-ball finish was a wild ride, each side having multiple chances. Huneycutt finally put it away +1. It is Huneycutt's eighth USCA national title and his first in AC doubles; he lacks only the GC singles title for a complete set.

After a Soo error Morgan controlled game 1 of the singles final, winning +24tp. He had good control of a delayed triple in game 2, but had to roquet partner ball while scoring rover. After Soo advanced a ball to 4-back, Morgan, whose shooting reached a very high standard this week, center-balled yet another lift shot to win game, match, and championship. Having won the GC singles title last year and both titles here, Morgan now holds three USCA national championship titles.