



## 2018 USCA NATIONAL GOLF CROQUET CHAMPIONSHIPS

September 19-23, Lake Toxaway, Burlingame, and Chattooga croquet clubs



Sherif Abdelwahab and Blake Fields set records in winning Championship Doubles at the 2018 USCA National Golf Croquet Championships. Fields, eleven years old, shattered the record for youngest US national titlist. Abdelwahab extended his streak of wins at this event to seven, by far the longest such streak in US national championship history. It was his tenth national GC title, breaking the record he had held jointly with Ben Rothman.



Sherif Abdelwahab

Abdelwahab then went on to win the singles title, his second straight sweep of both titles, extending his record to eleven overall GC titles.

This was the third time this tournament has been held on "the Plateau", the home of an unprecedented croquet boom over the past decade. With two new clubs this year, there are now twelve USCA-member clubs along or near the 32-mile stretch of highway running from Lake Toxaway to Sky Valley. The emphasis on Golf Croquet has been a major factor in this explosive growth.

Hurricane Florence had little effect on the area, and was long gone by the start of the tournament, but had a big effect on the tournament nonetheless. With uncertainty about the likely path and timing of the storm, its possible effect on travel, and some players' needing to deal with the storm's aftermath at home, there were several withdrawals in the days before the tournament. But with most forecasts showing minimal impact to the Plateau itself, the committee decided to continue with the tournament as scheduled. Fortunately there were enough local players on the waiting list to fill out the 40-player field.

Day 1, Wednesday, saw most of the doubles action. With no major upsets in Championship Doubles, top seeds Abdelwahab and Blake and #2 seeds Rich Lamm and Jeff Soo advanced through the semifinals of the best-of-three knockout. In First Flight the day ended with three pairs still in contention in the two-life (Draw & Process) format. Billy Harper and Jim Teel were undefeated. George Enochs and Will Stenack, and Jeff Baillis and Chris Weihs, had one loss each.

Each flight had a "plate" (consolation) knockout for pairs knocked out early, and all but one of the eligible pairs in each flight opted in. Karen Connery-Albert and Ellie Griffith won in First Flight. The Championship plate didn't quite finish; Michael Albert and Cheryl Bromley would go on to win the final later in the week.

The singles blocks played out over the next day and a half. Typically, there were upsets from the first round onward. Peter Carlin beat all three top seeds in his block, easily advancing to the knockout. Mike Orgill leapt out to a 6-1 lead over Soo, and hung on to win 7-6. The biggest upset of all, by ranking, was Dick Boger's 7-6 win over Mohammad Kamal.

In both flights, four players advanced from each block. There was no net-points tiebreak; if needed, a playoff would determine which players would advance to the knockout. Three of the five blocks had such a tie. In Championship Flight, Macey White beat Leo McBride to claim the fourth spot advancing from Block B, while Boger continued his run of upsets, beating Bromley, to advance from Block C. First Flight Block B finished with a four-way tie for second, mandating a two-round playoff to eliminate one player. Luckily for the Tournament Director, a possible five-way tie in First Flight Block A was quashed when Enochs beat Connery-Albert 7-6 in the last round.

Championship Singles had twelve players in the knockout, hence a play-in round. This was played Friday, immediately after the block tiebreak playoffs. All eyes were on the Huff v. Fields match. Both players looked relaxed, played quickly, and shot well. Fields played a remarkable jump shot from around ten feet to clear Huff's ball in the jaws of hoop 3, on the way to winning the first game 7-3. Game 2 went down to the wire, finishing with a long battle for the thirteenth hoop, Fields winning to advance to the quarterfinals.

All four top seeds advanced through the Championship Singles quarterfinals on Saturday morning. Huneycutt easily won his semifinal against Soo, 7-3, 7-4. Abdelwahab and Kamal split the first two games of their match, before Abdelwahab went on a tear to take the decider 7-0.

First Flight Singles began the day with eight players in the Draw & Process knockout, and ended the day with three left standing: Baillis, Stenack, and Teel.

As with the doubles, most eligible players opted in for the Singles plate knockouts. The winners, Todd Russell and Cheryl Bromley, were awarded fused-glass plates that had been designed, handmade, and donated by Rich Lamm and Tim Charney.

On Sunday at Lake Toxaway, Harper & Teel continued their unbeaten run to claim the First Flight Doubles title. In First Flight Singles, Stenack beat Baillis 7-3 to advance to the final against Teel. Teel won, 7-4.

In the Championship Doubles final, Lamm & Soo controlled game 1, winning 7-4. Abdelwahab and Fields bounced back strongly to win the next game 7-3. The deciding game was close from start to finish, with several lead changes, building to an exciting hoop 13. A key block by Abdelwahab set up Fields for the match-winning point, which he scored to raucous applause from the audience of nearly a hundred players and spectators.

Abdelwahab continued in strong form through the singles final. Huneycutt started well in both games, but Abdelwahab used his powerful clearing stroke to take control and build an inexorable lead each time, winning his third overall and second straight national GC singles title, 7-1, 7-4.

## RESULTS

### CHAMPIONSHIP SINGLES

- 1 Sherif Abdelwahab
- 2 Danny Huneycutt
- =3 Mohammad Kamal
- =3 Jeff Soo
- =5 Michael Albert
- =5 Blake Fields
- =5 Matthew Griffith
- =5 Macey White
- =9 Richard Boger
- =9 Jim Butts
- =9 Peter Carlin
- =9 Jimmy Huff
- =13 Cheryl Bromley
- =13 Leo McBride
- =15 Rich Lamm
- =15 Kenny Lovett
- =15 Michael Orgill
- =18 Sandra Knuth Walsh
- =18 Diane Walker
- =20 Richard Dell
- =20 Justin Fields
- =20 Jochen Lucke
- 24 Jim Hanks

**PLATE WINNER: Cheryl Bromley**

### CHAMPIONSHIP DOUBLES

- 1 Sherif Abdelwahab & Blake Fields
- 2 Rich Lamm & Jeff Soo
- =3 Peter Carlin & Macey White
- =3 Jim Hanks & Danny Huneycutt
- =5 Michael Albert & Cheryl Bromley
- =George Bagwell & Kenny Lovett
- =5 Richard Boger & Gil Flowers
- =5 Jim Butts & Justin Fields
- =5 Richard Dell & Bill Hartmann
- =5 Matthew Griffith & Jimmy Huff
- =5 Jeffrey Hill & Michael Orgill
- =5 Sandra Knuth Walsh & Leo McBride

**PLATE WINNERS: Michael Albert & Cheryl Bromley**

### FIRST FLIGHT SINGLES

- 1 Jim Teel
- 2 William Stenack
- 3 Jeff Baillis
- =4 Judith Carlin
- =4 George Enochs
- =4 John Walker
- =7 Adrienne Lucke
- =7 Chris Weihs
- 9 Billy Harper
- =10 Karen Albert Connery
- =10 Ellie Griffith
- =10 Bill Hartmann
- =10 Jeffrey Hill
- =10 Todd Russell
- 15 Bill Taber
- 16 Karen Weihs

**PLATE WINNER: Todd Russell**

### FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES

- 1 Billy Harper & Jim Teel
- 2 George Enochs & William Stenack
- 3 Jeff Baillis & Chris Weihs
- 4 Diane Walker & 4 John Walker
- =5 Judith Carlin & Bill Taber
- =5 Adrienne Lucke & Jochen Lucke
- =7 Karen Albert Connery & Ellie Griffith
- =7 Todd Russell & Karen Weihs

**PLATE WINNERS: Karen Connery-Albert & Ellie Griffith**



Photos by Don Buebendorf  
Jeff Soo, T.D.