

2014 Mission Hills Invitational

Mission Hills Country Club

25 February – 1 March 2014

Players and spectators alike journeyed to Southern California expecting the usual sunny weather and low humidity; it is a desert. But Mission Hills Invitational guests were witness to a rare event, rain in the desert! The long overdue winter rains in California slowed traffic to a crawl in Los Angeles, but only slightly inconvenienced the resilient croquet players. With single banking throughout the tournament, play progressed smoothly despite a day of showers.

Some surprising results shook up the Championship singles block. Jim Butts and Steve Mossbrook had an impressive showing with four wins, losing only to Ben Rothman and tying with Peter Bach. Peter the pilot was flying high with peg outs in all four of his victories which earned him enough net points to take the second seed in the playoff ladder. Ron Hendry struggled through block play, but his two wins were enough to move on. It only took one win and a bit of luck to get a playoff spot. The tournament's four and five seeds Larry Stettner and Missy Ramey each managed one win but net points favored the former professor. Missy would be left to focus on the doubles competition.

Despite only one singles win between the two of them, Missy Ramey and Rick Alderson combined for more than the sum of their (singles) results in the doubles tournament. Shrewd tactics and fearless attacking helped to secure three victories by the narrowest of margins for the unfamiliar duo. Ben Rothman and his "Uncle" Larry Stettner were the only team able to beat Missy and Rick, although they had their own narrow victories and a convincing loss to Steve Mossbrook and Peter Bach. Jim Butts and Ron Hendry formed an ex-presidents team and looked strong on their way to the ladder. In the playoffs Steve Mossbrook and Peter Bach would have a chance to beat Ben and Larry twice in a row until Steve stuffed a fateful hoop. Ben and Larry managed the deadness just right and moved onto the final 22-19. While the ex-presidents regularly scored over twenty points in the block, they were reined in by deadness and great management by Missy and Rick who pulled off yet another narrow victory 12-10 in the semifinal.

First flight doubles followed a similar narrative with Nick Gray and Cameron Evans as front runners and the unlikely pairing of Patrick Dugan and Elaine Kennedy as shrewd managers. Patrick and Elaine kept their games close and had success in last turns including a one point victory over Nick and Cam. With just one loss, Nick and Cam ran break after break and even pegged out 26-6 in the semifinals against Bob Morford and Toni Kemp. The rematch was incredibly efficient with Nick and Cam using only 4 breaks to go all around and hand Patrick and Elaine their biggest loss 26-5 in the final.



Ben Rothman (Tournament Director) Nick Gray & Cameron Evans (First Flight Doubles winners), Mary Rodeberg (Tournament Manager)

Nick and Cam pegged out in singles games as well, but their hyper-aggressive play was stymied by unfamiliar opponents who were quite familiar with deadness management. Don Parker has been playing croquet since the age of two, but the father of six only recently started playing tournament croquet in Ellsworth, Maine. Don's lifetime of experience helped him to not only manage deadness, but match his opponents hit for hit when push came to shove. Don lost only one block game on his way into the top playoff spot. Don's doubles partner, Chris Sullivan, also kept the locals guessing with victories against Nick, Cam and Patrick. Bob Morford was the only local to beat Chris in block play which earned him the fourth seed in the double elimination ladder.

The First Flight players seemed to be auditioning for the top flight as both Cameron and Bob pegged out in the first round of the knockout ladder. Bob's victory against Don Parker was a scorching 26-2 in fewer than ten total turns! Bob could not keep his momentum going and sadly lost his next two

games, earning third place. Don Parker learned his lesson and avoided giving breaks away against Chris Sullivan to set up a final between the top two block finishers. Cameron came out strong, but ran into a wall of deadness early in the game. Don tried to capitalize, but Cameron cleared his third hoop from the boundary and outpaced Don 20-11 for the First Flight crown.



Ben Rothman (Tournament Director) Cameron Evans (First Flight Singles winner), Mary Rodeberg (Tournament Manager)

In the Championship doubles final, Larry and Missy played a game of one-ball while Ben and Rick stayed out of the game. Eventually Rick failed to clear Ben from position and the club pro entered the game with conviction. Rothman hit his partner from forty feet and managed to build the break off of Missy who was set up at hoop six. Ben ran the break around and set Larry up with a three-ball break at hoop four. After a few missteps, Rick and Missy gained significant deadness and Ben and Larry dug in to the corner awaiting the end of the game. Rick Alderson had no way to set up his partner, but twice in a row he attacked corner three and managed to build breaks. Rick's only failing was making the even hoops too cleanly as he went out of bounds after scoring hoop four and then two-back in last turns. Even with heroic play in those late attacks Rick and Missy fell short 19-14.



Larry Stettner & Ben Rothman (Championship Doubles winners), Mary Rodeberg (Tournament Manager)

The Championship singles ladder was double elimination for the top four seeds, but the other four players were given just one life to live. Jim Butts kept both of his lives with a tough 18-16 win against the second seed Peter Bach. Steve Mossbrook nearly upset the reigning champion with a stupendous attack early in the game. Steve ran the break all the way around the court and had elaborate grooming plans until he stuffed his rover hoop. Ben managed to peel Steve through and decided to try peeling his partner a bit for good measure. Ben peeled through hoops two, three and four before pegging out Steve's ball and eventually winning 26-15. Jim Butts attacked fearlessly, but a missed hoop sent him to the loser's bracket and propelled Ben to the holder's spot in the final.

Ron Hendry may have struggled with the block play, but he was able to peak at the right time in the sudden death bracket. Ron defeated Mary Rodeberg 26-2 before eliminating Peter, Steve and Jim with some of his best play in years. Ron would need his best in the final to beat Ben twice in a row. Ben faltered early, missing the ball Ron left just on court during a costly attack. It looked like Ron would run it around, but one stuffed hoop changed all that. Ben went on to win the first (and thus, only) game in the final. This was Ben's fourth consecutive invitational title.



Ben Rothman (Championship Singles winner), Mary Rodeberg (Tournament Manager)

The top three finishers earned beautiful custom made croquet coasters fused by the talented Tim Charney, who was gracious enough to also host the tournament's toast and tally.



Tim Charney's coasters

See more pictures in the [2014 Invitational album](#).

<https://picasaweb.google.com/116136227812963188841/2014Invitational>

CHAMPION FLIGHT SINGLES

| NAME | HDCP | PLACE | TRK PTS |
|-----------------|------|-------------------|---------|
| Ben Rothman | -4.5 | 1 st | 0 |
| Ron Hendry | 0 | 2 nd | 3 |
| Jim Butts | -1 | 3 rd | -3 |
| Steve Mossbrook | 2 | 4 th | 18 |
| Peter Bach | 2 | T-5 th | 15 |
| Rich Schiller | 2.5 | T-5 th | 12 |
| Larry Stettner | 1.5 | T-7 th | -9 |
| Mary Rodeberg | 4.5 | T-7 th | 13 |
| Missy Ramey | 0.5 | 9 th | -10 |
| Rick Alderson | 3.5 | 10 th | -6 |

FIRST FLIGHT SINGLES

| NAME | HDCP | PLACE | TRK PTS |
|----------------|------|-----------------|---------|
| Cameron Evans | 6 | 1 st | -1 |
| Donald Parker | 9 | 2 nd | 33 |
| Bob Morford | 8 | 3 rd | 5 |
| Chris Sullivan | 8 | 4 th | 4 |
| Nick Gray | 6 | 5 th | -12 |
| Patrick Dugan | 10 | 6 th | -3 |

CHAMPIONSHIP DOUBLES

| NAME | HDCP | PLACE |
|-----------------|------|-------------------|
| Ben Rothman | -4.5 | 1 st |
| Larry Stettner | 1.5 | 1 st |
| Missy Ramey | 0.5 | 2 nd |
| Rick Alderson | 3.5 | 2 nd |
| Jim Butts | -1 | T-3 rd |
| Ron Hendry | 0 | T-3 rd |
| Steve Mossbrook | 2 | T-3 rd |
| Peter Bach | 2 | T-3 rd |

| | | |
|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Rich Schiller | 2.5 | 5th |
| Mary Rodeberg | 4.5 | 5th |

FIRST FLIGHT DOUBLES

| NAME | HDCP | PLACE |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Nick Gray | 6 | 1st |
| Cameron Evans | 6 | 1st |
| Elaine Kennedy | 15 | 2nd |
| Patrick Dugan | 10 | 2nd |
| Bob Morford | 8 | T-3rd |
| Toni Kemp | 9 | T-3rd |
| Chris Sullivan | 8 | T-3rd |
| Donald Parker | 9 | T-3rd |