



2017 USCA CROQUET WEEK

National Croquet Center
West Palm Beach, FL
March 11-19, 2017



New memories were made this year during what has been traditionally termed as 'Croquet Week', a terrible name only in that the festivities offered from the USCA extend long past what most people would consider or recognize as seven days. Let's call it a weak name for a strong week, the strength involving three schools and two tournaments, few intertwining and totaling up to just two days short of a fortnight. I mention that annually, more out of amusement and certainly not in the form of any complaint; there is something for everyone and everyone loves every aspect to which they have been attracted.

The schools speak somewhat for themselves, one for standard six-wicket croquet, one with the focus on tournament and game play strategies and the third devoted solely to Golf Croquet. It is of no surprise that many of the participants attend not only to improve and enhance their skills and knowledge, but to prep for the main events to follow, the first of these being the three days of spirited Singles Golf Croquet.

This year the event was held in two Flights. In the Championship Flight, after two days of qualifying 13-point games, the top four seeds moved into a straight knock-out with best-of-three matches. Using the same format, the First Flight allowed for only two to progress into the Playoffs. Three courts were used, the games needed no time limits and, given the reasonable weather, everything ran smoothly and according to plan. Almost.

In the First Flight, four of the five participants entered the event with no ranking, thus making those taking side-bets a little more than nervous. Karen Heckman, the only player with enough experience to actually have a Golf Croquet handicap, started the event as though she were the world champion; only then to look simply befuddled by a mallet as day two began. Meanwhile, while Larry Cranfield's history with Golf Croquet was limited at best, his strong shot-making in the six wicket game provided enough fire-power to eventually meet the mysterious Karen Heckman in the Finals. Not surprisingly, good shooting usually outplays mystery, and while the scores are deceptive in that both games were played well, Larry took the top honors with 7-1 and 7-4 scores.

What was confusing in the Championship Flight was, well, Sandra Knuth Walsh. Now, if you know Sandy, I naturally know what you might be thinking, but 'that' wasn't it. In fact, it had nothing to do with hats or socks or outfits or what we usually think are dances or, well, a million other things. She simply hit almost everything...every ball and every wicket and every jump shot! In fact, she lost only two of her 13 games (both to Stephen Jackson, who she overcame in one Semi) and was, basically, close to unbeatable. Favorite David McCoy, who took three games (7-3, 5-7, 7-6) to dispatch of Justin Berbig in the other Semi-Final, never really had a chance in the Final, Sandy winning (7-5, 7-1). It was all quite impressive!

While the Golf Croquet event was actually up in attendance this year, the Club Team Championships participation was surprisingly low! This did not affect the overall nature of the event, but it did force the need for some more creative formatting. Three Flights were in play. In the Championship Flight, each doubles team played each other three times in their fight to make the Playoffs. In the First and Second Flight, each team faced each other twice. All matches were one hour and fifteen minutes in duration, six courts were in use and since the Playoffs were single-elimination draws, every block match counted. For example, the number one seed

(after the preliminary rounds) in the Championship Flight found a bye into the Finals. In the Second Flight, in which all teams made the Playoffs, the top two seeds received a very favorable bye into the Semi-Finals. In all Flights, this seeding was often determined only by the outcomes of the last round of play.

In regard to the overall Club battle, the fight for the Lyons Trophy, things were also interesting. While there are usually three divisions of classification, determined by the number of doubles teams each Club sends, this year there were only two. In Division I, The National Croquet Club and the Bombay Mallet & Wicket Croquet Club sent seven and six teams respectively, thus finding themselves pitted directly against one another for points. Division II encompassed only four Clubs, with none of them offering more than two teams. This may have limited Division II participants a reasonable chance to win the overall Lyons Trophy, but the competition for the division title was fierce.

In the Championship Flight, two sub-plots developed quickly. One involved the battle between defending Champions, Sherif Abdelwahab-Sandy Walsh Knuth (Bombay), and the very strong team of Derek Wassink-Randy Cardo (NCC), both duos fighting to gain the valuable bye into the Finals. Both teams experienced unexpected losses within the blocks, and it was eventually Wassink-Cardo who stumbled into the first seed. (Within the blocks they had won two of the three matches, but no game was won by more than three points.) The other story involved the team of David Spivey-William Trower (NCC). Somewhat in limbo in the handicap hierarchy, their team was basically offered a choice of which Flight in which to participate. They thought big and it paid off, for while starting off slowly, they managed to capture the third and last spot within the Playoffs.

Games had been close throughout, and that did not stop once the ladder began. The Spivey-Trower team's hopes came to an end in the Semis, but not without a well-played (14-18) battle against Abdelwahab-Knuth. The Final itself was also a treat for all in attendance, with Wassink-Cardo barely holding on to capture the Flight with a 13-11 nail-biter. While the Bombay Club had already been mathematically eliminated from the Lyons Trophy, the local crowd was on their seats throughout.

In the First Flight, Lynda Sudderberg-Chad Goodwin (NCC) erased the hopes of Charles Alexander-Tim McCormick, and the Woodlawn Croquet Program, of capturing Division II honors with a 12-11 Semi-Final victory. Charles Berberich-Ron Eccles, playing for the Denver Croquet Club, fell to a similar fate (9-12) at the hands of Jeff Morrison-Clint Fowlkes (NCC) in the other. The all National Croquet Club Final itself was relaxed in both nature and excitement, Sudderberg-Goodwin playing much the best to capture the First Flight with a 14-5 score.

It was probably the Second Flight which offered the most drama. After some solid play throughout the event, Hal Denton-Byron Lee, playing for West River Wickets, and Conner & Jane Helms, representing the Oklahoma City Golf & Country Club, found themselves with a nice case of mathematical simplicity. Both teams had reached the Finals, and the winner would not only capture the Flight, but the Division II Title for their Club. And a great game it was. The final score would be recorded as 14-12, and despite some last turn heroics, the Denton-Byron duo walked away with, well, everything. Hildegard Jones-Tina Hinkley (Bombay) and Sam Orleans-Eugenia Wilkie (West River) took Third Place honors.

It is hoped that next year we will see more Clubs field a challenge and enjoy what is always an amazing time. Or, as an individual, come to a school, compete in the Golf Croquet Tournament or spend a week (really 12 days) doing them all! A lot of hard work goes into all of the activities and it shows. Many thanks go out to the staff of both the USCA and the National Croquet Center, the crew from Sandy James for the fantastic food and service and to the grounds crew for keeping the balls rolling. The Commissioner, Les Kelley, and Bernie Pattie,

were missed this year and hopefully they will be able to cause some chaos next year! Finally, incredible thanks go out to Johnny Mitchell, who has just stepped down as the USCA President after so many years of devotion. Likewise, the warmest of welcomes go out to Sara Low, the newest keeper of the castle! Good luck to you, Sara, and congratulations to The National Croquet Center for recapturing the Lyons Trophy!

-John C. Osborn (Instructor/TD/TD)

FINAL ORDER OF FINISH

GOLF CROQUET



CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT



John Osborn (TD), Sandra Knuth Walsh, David McCoy

1. SANDRA KNUTH WALSH
2. David McCoy
3. Justin Berbig
3. Stephen Jackson
5. Terry Howatt
6. Doug Coller
7. Gil Flowers
7. Richard Boger
7. Bob Chilton
10. Adrienne Lucke

FIRST FLIGHT

1. LARRY CRANFIELD
2. Karen Heckman
3. Scott Scharlau
4. Debbie Davidoff
5. Amber Fasula



Karen Heckman, John Osborn (TD), Larry Cranfield

CLUB TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS

LYONS TROPHY BREAKDOWN

<u>DIVISION ONE</u>	<u>TEAMS</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
National Croquet Club	7 Teams	11
Bombay Mallet & Wicket Croquet Club	6 Teams	3

<u>DIVISION TWO</u>	<u>TEAMS</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
West River Wickets	2 Teams	3
Oklahoma City Golf & Country Club	2 Teams	2
Woodlawn Croquet Program	1 Team	2
Denver Croquet Club	1 Team	1

CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT



John Osborn (TD), Randy Cardo, Derek Wassink, Sara Low (USCA President)

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| 1. DEREK WASSINK-RANDY CARDO | NATIONAL CROQUET CLUB |
| 2. Sherif Abdelwahab-Sandra Knuth | Bombay Mallet & Wicket Croquet Club |
| 3. David Spivey-William Trower | National Croquet Club |
| 4. David Collie-Kevin Hansley | National Croquet Club |
| 5. Bob Chilton-David McCoy | National Croquet Club |

FIRST FLIGHT



Lynda Sudderberg, John Osborn (TD), Chad Goodwin, Sara Low (USCA President)

1. LYNDA SUDDERBERG-CHAD GOODWIN

2. Jeff Morrison-Clint Fowlkes
3. Charles Alexander-Tim McCormick
4. Charles Berberich-Ron Eccles
5. Richard Scherf-Richard Carlson
6. George Fulmer-Ted Cooley
7. Jeanne Branthover-Richard Boger
8. Karen Heckman-Carla Rueck

NATIONAL CROQUET CLUB

- National Croquet Club
- Woodlawn Croquet Program
- Denver Croquet Club
- National Croquet Club
- Bombay Mallet & Wicket Croquet Club
- Bombay Mallet & Wicket Croquet Club
- Bombay Mallet & Wicket Croquet Club



SECOND FLIGHT



John Osborn (TD), Hal Denton, Byron Lee, Sara Low (USCA President)

1. HAL DENTON-BYRON LEE
2. Conner Helms-Jane Helms
3. Hildegard Jones-Tina Hinkley
4. Sam Orleans-Eugenia Wilkie
5. Beverley Cardo-Anne Carr
6. Joe Warren-Nancy Warren

- WEST RIVER WICKETS**
Oklahoma City Golf & Country Club
Bombay Mallet & Wicket Croquet Club
West River Wickets
Bombay Mallet & Wicket Croquet Club
Oklahoma City Golf & Country Club

LYONS TROPHY WINNER

