

THE STICKY WICKET

MARCH 2024



2024 Steuber Classic



Tom Cooper, Loretta Cooper, with GC Championship Winner Tamer Hatata,
Finalist Macey White, David McCoy

The Steuber Classic featured some spectacular high-level play at NCC last week. Sponsored jointly by the Croquet Foundation of America and the NC Club, the tournament players enjoyed beautiful weather for 4 1/2 days. Just as the finals ended on Sunday March 3, the heavens opened up with a colossal downpour. Congratulations to all winners and players and to Tournament Managers **Tom and Loretta Cooper**, assisted by **Carla Rueck** for a first-class event.



T. Cooper, Championship 6W Winner Bob Van Tassell,
Loretta Cooper, Finalist Dick Sullivan, D. McCoy



Tom and Loretta Cooper, First Flight GC Winner Chris Morris,
Finalist Tom Lindley, D. McCoy



T. Cooper, 6W Second Flight Winner Carl Archiniaco,
Finalist David Kepner, D. McCoy



T. Cooper, 6W First Flight Winner Nancy Crouch,
Finalist Mark Ski, D. McCoy



Carla Rueck

*The Sticky Wicket is a publication of the National Croquet Club
700 Florida Mango Road, West Palm Beach, Fl
Editor, Mary C. Churchill. Pagination, Franck Meunier
Reporters, Sheila Petersen, Mary Galasso,
Marianne Davidson, Lenore Orlowska-Warren.
Photographer, Yen Sullivan Board Liaison, Ruth Summers*

NC Club President's Column



Playing Croquet:

Back in 1965, I played croquet in our front yard. I enjoyed hitting an opponent's ball into the street and sending my own ball through a wicket, but I did not play again for 55 years, just after my wife and I moved to West Palm Beach.

Tom Lindley

In 2020, **Hal Denton** insisted that I had to try "real" croquet. Hal arranged for a short lesson and then we played one game. That was all it took -- I was hooked. Not long after, **Phil Robinson** and I won our flight in Summer League, and that set the hook even deeper.

I play croquet to have fun and relax. I play in a beautiful space (at the NCC), amongst almost uniformly wonderful people, most often in good weather, on green grass, and under blue skies. The game's etiquette and the good sportsmanship allow players to have competitive fun without fighting. And the focus the game requires gives me a Zen-like escape from the stresses of outside life.

But simply having fun is tested in tournaments. There, a player is expected to win or to learn. Telling myself that I am playing only to have fun is like telling myself "Do not think of a pink elephant." Tournaments begin with anxiety, then an intense session on the Rules, then increased anxiety, then the question of "why should I ever play another tournament ever", then perhaps "I can do this," then back to anxiety. And tournaments require stamina, in part to deal with the anxiety. (However, I keep signing up for more because I learn so much.)

And, even if I have the stamina and get into the right mindset, there are interruptions. The most important are from well-intentioned members who have questions or suggestions or complaints and who want to be heard then and there. Trying to be a servant-leader, I want to help as I am able but, let's face it, I am not playing croquet.

Other things also interrupt – such as the Club's tax audit, considering the great suggestions members submit, addressing the few but not insignificant complaints we receive, and of course writing this monthly column. Which is fun. But again, I am not playing croquet.

Finally, each of these is something I have voluntarily taken on because I want our croquet-playing club to be the best and friendliest ever. So, bottom line, I want to thank each and every one of you for allowing me occasionally to play croquet in this wonderful facility among such wonderful people.

Tom Lindley, President, NC Club Board of Directors

Editor's Note



ODE TO NCC and CROQUET

In the heart of Florida's sunny space,
Stands NCC, croquet's hallowed place.
White-clad players swing mallets with ease,
Amidst green grass and royal palm trees.
Legends like Steuber etch their names,
And the Hall of Fame inspires our games.
A clubhouse grand where friendships flow,
With the USCA, we proudly grow.
The wealth comes down from the CFA,
So the Club supplies the fun and the play.

Wine and Wickets, a cherished ritual,
On Tuesdays, cheer is quite habitual.
Ruth Brown's 6 Wicket marvels unfold,
At Friday Strikers, scores are not told.
On Thursday nights, an Owl emerges,
Cocktail in hand, and competition surges.

In tournaments fierce, members stand tall,
We host and compete, keeping eye on the ball.
Those wickets are getting mighty tight,
While yards-long clearings take all our might.
Now courts are scarce, we claim them all,
We will have more, but not in the fall.
Some people, it's said, lose their cool,
Maybe next door, we should build a pool.

No, let patience guide us through this year
For tomorrow's courts will bring good cheer.

Forget your cares, play on, play up
No matter the pain, you just have to stay up.
It's croquet we love, the sport and camaraderie,
When it comes to luck, we won the lottery.

So here's a toast to NCC's reign,
Where croquet history inspires each game!

Mary C. Churchill



Hall of Fame Gala

March 1, 2024



Sara Low

On a starry, starry beauteous night, **Cheryl Bromley** and **Sara Low** were inducted into the croquet Hall of Fame. Thanks to **Carol Stuart**, her hard-working committee and all supporters for a memorable evening of croquet history, delicious food, free-flowing cocktails, dancing and good cheer.



Cheryl Bromley



Priscilla Flowers,
Cheryl Bromley, David McCoy



Elaine Soo, Alex and Mary Galasso



Carol Bannister, Trudy Crowetz, Mary Churchill,
John Bannister, Pam Groh, Sheila Peterson



Sheila Peterson, Nancy Sansalone,
Suzanne Turner, Caryl Firth



Zack Watson, Don and Jan Allison



Mary Churchill, Bob Broadway



Hall of Famers: Ruth Sommers, Anne Robinson, Mike Gibbons, David Ekstrom, Rory Kelley, Cheryl Bromley, David McCoy, Sara Low, Rich Curtis, Johnny Mitchell, Mohammad Kamal, John C. Osborn, Eugene Young, Danny Huneycutt

Tips from the Pro



Zack Watson

Let's talk about those frustrating splits. Why aren't your splits going in the direction you need them to go? Let's break it down into a few basic steps.

Step 1: With your striker ball against the ball you have hit, point the front ball where you would like it to go.

Step 2: Source the spot you would like the striker ball to go.

Step 3: Calculate a spot to aim that is half way between those two points.

Step 4: Determine what type of shot or hand placement will give you those distances (half roll, drive shot etc.)

Once all of this is determined, focus hard on the aim point and speed. Click your heels 3 times and...bang! Beautiful shot.

Zack Watson, Head Pro

OUR NEW MEMBERS

The Membership Committee and NCCLub are happy to welcome our new members:

Carl & Susan Johnson

Ken Lovvorn

Sara Persons

WANTED! Club volunteers to coach Special Olympics young athletes. This is the 12th year that NCC has hosted the Special Olympic GC program for Palm Beach County at the Center. The kids are great and fun! Please contact **John Bannister**, johnbannister1977@gmail.com or 561 339 2081.

SAVE THE DATES

- March 8-10 USCA Croquet Week GC
- March 14-17 6W USCA Club Teams 6W
- March 22-24, USCA SE District GC Tournament

Update on Those Dawson Balls

A Whole New Generation?

If you think all croquet balls are the same, read on. There are different croquet balls, but we will concentrate on the Dawson balls.

If you look at the croquet balls from a distance, they look similar. However, there is a slight difference between the older generation Dawson balls and the newer generation Dawson balls. After croquet wear and tear, the balls can become smaller. Because some balls weigh less than other balls, the distance they travel can be a factor when setting up that perfect shot. If you ever had difficulty with a jump shot--and who hasn't?, it could be that the bounce in the ball was slightly different from the previous set of balls. Let's be frank, though, it's usually the shooter, not the ball!

Currently, each Dawson croquet ball is molded and cured one at a time in Australia. Recently the formula was changed because a chemical was banned. The new generation Dawson balls were recently approved by the World Croquet Federation and are starting to be distributed in the USA. "At NCC, we are anticipating the arrival of our first set," says **David McCoy**.

"I don't have time to wait for the production of these balls," says **Michael Todorovich**. There are over 10,000 croquet clubs in the world, some with more than one court. It will take a long time to replace the balls in all the courts in the world at a production of one ball at a time.

"I am currently looking into a computer-aided design to create a croquet ball that could be produced quicker and in the USA. I have the first model, working with engineers. The bounce, the weight, the top and bottom seal and the durability are promising," says Michael. The final changes in dimensions and testing process will need to be approved by the World Croquet Federation. Time is of the essence.



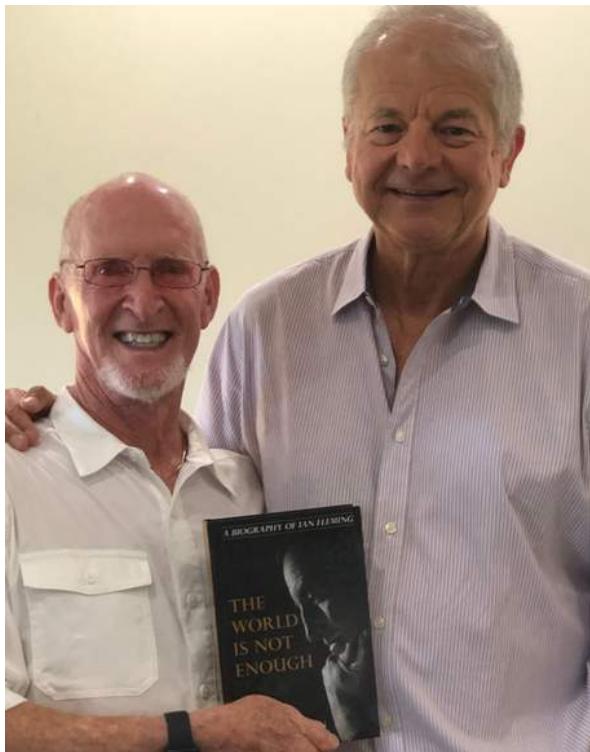
Michael Todorovich

NCC strives to set the highest standard for tournament play. "We use only Dawson balls for all of our tournaments," says **Zack Watson**, NCC Pro. "We will eventually need to replace all the older Dawson balls with newer ones."

Worldwide, the sport of croquet, like many other sports, is developing new innovations in equipment. From wickets to balls to mallets, everything is evolving. The question is, how will NCC continue to set the highest standard for tournament play?

Mary Galasso

Dine & Discover Luncheon Highlight Mysteries of 007 Revealed



Louis Tyrrell, Oliver Buckton

For fans of James Bond and the world of 007, FAU Professor **Oliver Buckton** opened up the curtain on the life of **Ian Fleming** as an author who, though rather reclusive, parlayed his male fantasies into a global book and movie franchise that captivated millions of fans over the world. *Buckton's book, The World Is Not Enough*, describes how Fleming, born in 1908 of well to do parents in England, drew on his years with M, the UK's Secret Service, to develop "the spy story to end all spy stories."

From *39 Steps* to *Casino Royale* in 1953 to *Dr No*, *Goldfinger* and the last, *Octopussy*, Fleming created MI6 spy James Bond, always endangered, battling and capturing bad guys in a setting of fast cars, luxury living and gorgeous women, who always happened to show up at the right time. Many of the books were written, according to Buckton, at Fleming's estate in Jamaica where he loved to retreat from the social scene in London. He died in 1964, leaving a sizable estate that lives on way after he did.

Thank you **Lou Tyrrell** for bringing Oliver Buckton to NCC.



The audience was treated to some old film clips and of course delicious **Sandy James** lunch complete with an "007" dessert.

Croquet Was Once an Olympic Sport. Then It Wasn't. If Breakdancing Is, Then Why Not Croquet?

The year 1900 was a major milestone for the International Olympic Games. Though little is known about croquet in the 1900 Olympiad, the game of Croquet was listed as the only known program of the day. That year, the games were held in Paris concurrently with the Paris Exposition Universelle, a world's fair which included all sorts of bizarre events and lasted nearly three months, from June thru August. It was a bit of a circus with competitions including live pigeon shooting, tugs-of-war, Basque pelota and hot air ballooning.

For croquet, however, 1900 was the milestone, the very first year women were permitted to compete in the Olympics. Though women competed in tennis and golf, the croquet matches came first. The French entrants, **Madame Brohy** and **Mademoiselle Marie Ohier**, played their croquet match earlier than the others thereby making history as the very first women to play a match in the Olympics. Prior to this earthshattering event, as recently as 1896, women were not permitted to even watch much less participate in the Olympic games.

Singles and doubles croquet were included in the contests as was "one-ball play." Other than the 10 French competitors, there were no known foreign entrants in the croquet contests which rather guaranteed a plethora of gold and silver medals for France.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, universally recognized as the father of the modern Olympics, had the idea to combine the 1900 Olympic games and the Exposition Universelle thinking it would benefit both. The Exposition itself was a great commercial and financial success attracting nearly 300,000 visitors daily. Not so much the Olympic games which were marked by chaos and confusion and garnered very little interest on the part of the public.

Regrettably, 1900 was the only year in history that the sport of croquet was deemed eligible for an invitation to participate in the games. While women as well as men continued to participate in other Olympic sports, croquet did not meet the International Olympic Committees' long and complex requirements for inclusion in future Olympiads. The 1900 croquet match had attracted only one paying spectator. In order to participate in the Games, the IOC decides, among many other things, how much value a sport will add to the Olympics legacy, how popular the sport is in the host country and how much it would cost to broadcast the events. Money matters.

Fast forward to 2024 when the Olympic games will again take place in Paris and will include breakdancing. If breakdancing now qualifies as an Olympic sport, can croquet, the sport we love, be far behind?

Sheila Petersen



1900 Olympic Games

SPOTLIGHTS

We are more than men and women in white. We have lives.
Here are two backstories of interesting Club members.

Jane Grandusky, Artist, Teacher, Sports Fan

A native of West Palm Beach, **Jane Grandusky** is an artist-educator who taught for 24 years at the Dreyfoos School of the Arts. "I started with the school in 1989 before we even had students," she says. "The school was then called The Palm Beach County School of the Arts with grades 7 -12." Jane designed the first and lasting logo for the school that year. In 1997, **Alexander Dreyfoos** donated \$1 million and the name was changed to The Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts. Originally located at what is now the Bak Middle School of the Arts off 45 St, the campus moved next to Kravis in 1997 and became a 9th through 12th grade school. The school is currently ranked #90 in all public US high schools.



"I began as the first Visual Art Dean at the school, teaching drawing and portfolio, as well as managing a group of visual artists in residence," Jane says. "Later in my career, I became the Artistic Coordinator and artistic liaison with the School of the Arts Foundation that raises the funds needed to provide all the 'extras' for the arts and academic programs. I still volunteer for the Foundation."

Except for her college years, Jane has remained in the Palm Beaches with her family and high school sweetheart husband of 52 years. They have three children and five grandchildren; her daughter is a social studies teacher at Dreyfoos. Jane has had other sports in her life. Early on, she played tournament racket-ball until a knee injury sidelined her. Now the only sport in her life is croquet

Jane is an active volunteer for NCC, chairing the Dine & Discover Luncheon series, coaching frequently at events and also winning in tournaments. "I love croquet," says Jane. "It's a layered game that requires athletic skill and strategy along with a wonderful camaraderie. And like art-making, croquet requires you get in the zone, stay in the zone, and if you lose focus, you have to bring yourself back to the zone."

Marianne Davidson

Diane Young and Rich Rose



Diane Young-Rose and **Rich Rose**, met here in Florida three years ago, are newly married, and are new members of the croquet club.

Diane, originally from Basking Ridge, NJ started her career as a travel agent, then worked for the airlines. Needing a change, she moved to Florida seven years ago to join the Omphoy Ocean Resort & Spa in Palm Beach (now Tideline). Many of the hotel guests Diane catered to would visit the NCC for events, and that is how she first discovered the club.

Rich Rose, spent most of his adult life on Long Island, starting a career as an accountant. "I didn't like it, so I took some time off and discovered beer, not just the drinking kind, but beer distributors. That led to working directly for Anheuser Busch for many years managing their business on Long Island." A new door opened in his life when he moved to Florida right next door to Diane. Now that's Kismet!

Both Diane and Rich enjoy walking the beach in Boynton, discovering new restaurants and enjoying the good life in Florida. Diane continues to substitute teaching young children in school. Rich golfs. "Croquet is something we can do together," says Diane. "We really enjoy Wine & Wickets and Night Owls as both games attract different club members."

Lenore Orlowska-Warren

