



THE STICKY WICKET

DECEMBER 2023



Tree Lighting at the NCC



*The Sticky Wicket is a publication of the National Croquet Club
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NCClub President's Column

*Your Croquet Club: Changes, Developments,
and Other Good News*



Tom Lindley

The Task Force on Transparency recommended and the Board has adopted several changes that increase the transparency of Club leadership. These changes include making Agendas and Minutes timely available; creating new mechanisms for Members to influence agendas and to speak at Board meetings; and requiring Open Forums. If you want to know more, look on the Club's website at the new Bylaws and the Board's November Minutes.

With the Membership's adoption of new Articles and Bylaws, both Board and Committee members will now have staggered two-year terms, but there are special provisions for this transition year. If you want to know more about terms, again look at the new Bylaws and Board's November minutes.

The 2023 Annual Membership Meeting will be at 6 pm on December 7 at the NCC and by ZOOM. Please join us for reports and updates on both Club and CFA matters, including the new courts and new lighting.

Only a few years ago, the Club covered only about 30% of the CFA's expenses and it rarely had enough volunteers for the NCC's financially essential events. (Those events help keep our membership fees low). This year your Club is covering over 45% of the CFA's expenses and our new Volunteer Committee is helping find volunteers to cover those events.

We have great volunteers, but they cannot continue to carry the whole load without others helping too. All of us are busy, but more members should volunteer to help at events, to teach potential new members, to serve on committees and task forces, or to help at Special Olympics. Thank you volunteers!

The Task Force on Court Scheduling is making great progress on reducing the changes and conflicts that have aggravated Members in the past. But now the Season is upon us, the new courts are not yet available, and there is more to do, so please help us by offering your ideas to the members of that TF: Marie Sweetser, Priscilla Flowers, Bob Van Tassell, Nancy Sansalone, Ruth Summers, David McCoy, Cooky Donaldson, and Tom Lindley.

Finally, have fun playing croquet and enjoy the Holidays!

Tom Lindley, President, NC Club Board of Directors

Welcome Zack Watson! Inspiring Players At All Levels



Zack Watson, age 35, joined NCC part time this summer and is now the full time Director of Croquet.

Club members are already extolling his virtues of friendliness and valuable lessons. He spoke to *The Sticky Wicket* this week.

What made you want to come to NCC?

I made a decision earlier this year that I wanted to be a full-time croquet professional. I called Danny Huneycutt to get his thoughts, and two days later I had a call from David McCoy. I've played at NCC numerous times, have friends there and always loved it. After satisfying some of my concerns, we agreed. I'm excited about it, and there's so much we can do to make NCC the most desirable destination for the enjoyment of the members and for the great tournaments that attract the best players in the world.

My partner Sidney has been super supportive of the big change. We have a three-year old to consider and a baby on the way, very excited about that! Living right next door couldn't be more convenient. Getting that house was a big help.

You and Matt Essick have a good friendship and a good rivalry on the courts. It's great to see two young guys battling it out. Will you tell us more? How was the Solomon Cup?

Matt and I have become great friends as well as competitors. At age 25, he is such a great role model for croquet, how young people can be challenged by the sport, and he's just an amazing player. In November at Sarasota, the American team won the Solomon Cup, a traditional AC competition between the UK and US. You can see the trophy in our hallway. I'm happy to report I won all my matches. Matt and I lost one doubles game but won the rest and had a great time. With the addition of Kyle Maloof, the US has the youngest team ever, and will be strong competitors for many years.

What are your priorities for teaching our members?

My goal whether I'm giving a lesson, a clinic or organizing a competition, is to inspire players to have smiles on their faces, and want to come back for more. I also want players to expand their croquet experience, try different games. I am very eager to encourage Association Croquet, the game that is played worldwide and have GC players try 6W. I am now running two, two-ball shot clinics, one for beginners and one for more advanced players, teaching splits and angles.

(to be continued on page 3)

Welcome Zack Watson!

(continuation from page 2)

Do you have ideas for advancing the sport of croquet?

I very enthusiastic about what Jim Creasey is doing to get young people involved. He has plans next year to involve some 60 high schools in Florida. They can use their stadium grass for croquet courts. It's brilliant. I'm a big supporter of Jim and his brother. [see article p.3]

Other thoughts about NCC?

Yes, I'm determined to find a better solution for the hoops. The ground here is very soft, which loosens the hoops and makes it a challenge to have firm tight wickets. If we want to attract the biggest tournaments in the world, and I do, we must solve this problem and I have some ideas how to do it. For everyday play, the wickets we have are fine on most courts and we just put the tighter hoops on a few courts for the low handicap players. Most important, I think our groundskeepers do an excellent job considering the heavy use our courts get.

The second project I'm working on is the balls, a problem for everyone worldwide. Did you know that some balls are a smidge bigger than others? And the pink ball is hotter than all the others? We are getting an instrument that will measure exactly the size and I will be measuring every ball we have. Several people are working on solving the ball situation worldwide so that we can have the Dawson balls made somewhere.

What are your goals for your own croquet career?

My competitive career will be on hold for a year. Between family and professional life at NCC, this will be a big year for me and I'm thrilled. That's plenty.

Welcome Zack. We are thrilled too! Onward!

Mary C. Churchill

OUR NEW MEMBERS

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

Christine Casey
 Gerald Dolezar
 Babetta Ferris
 James Ferris
 JoAnne Moeller
 Anne Romanoff Ilyinsky
 Diane Rose
 Rich Rose
 Michael Whelchel
 Charles Werner
 Shelby Werner

Balls, Balls, Balls.

The Dawsons are Awesome.

In a modest shed, in a place you've probably never heard of, Humpty Doo, Adelaide, Australia, a ball bloke you've probably never heard of, **Paul Manwaring**, manufactures the world's premier competition croquet balls, the eponymous Dawsons.

Bryan Dawson was a legendary Aussie croquet player who concocted a special mix to create a perfectly round ball robust enough to withstand years of vigorous use and almost totally resilient to temperature changes. "Most recreational players don't know the difference between most croquet balls, but tournament players certainly do," according to **Johnny Mitchell** of the USCA, "And they love the Dawsons."



Dawson, who was inducted into the World Croquet Federation Hall of Fame in 2019, sold the business, cozy shed, top secret formula et al, to Paul Manwaring in 2018. The concoction includes a chemical that makes the balls nearly as lively as a Mexican jumping bean. "I met with Dawson a few times and he showed me how to do it." Manwaring told a reporter. "It's pretty scientific. It starts from a plastic base and color. Then you stir it, mold it and press it at a special temperature. Three hours later, they're pried from their case."

In 2022, a monkey wrench was thrown into the manufacture of the Dawsons. One of the ingredients used in the secret formula for the mix was banned in Australia and the balls are not behaving quite the same. "It just is a question of adapting to them and getting accustomed to the new balls" remarked **Danny Huneycutt**, top Professional and player. "They are still the awesome Dawsons."

Sheila Petersen



Jiminy Wicket & Special Olympics Introduce Croquet to Florida High School Students

Sporting Event at NCC Builds Friendships, Inclusion and Croquet

In May of this year, **James Creasey**, Founder and CEO of Jiminy Wicket, and **Bev Cardo**, NC Club member, hosted croquet indoors for 40 high school students at the Annual Youth Summit for Special Olympics of Florida in Orlando, Fl. As a result of seeing how much fun they were having, **Sherry Wheelock**, President/CEO, Special Olympics of Florida asked Creasey to bring this program to 12 schools across the state.

In September, Creasey traveled 1,400 miles in six days, gave away 22 croquet sets, and trained 20 school teachers both how to play and how to teach golf croquet. Now there are more than 300 new young GC players in Florida enjoying this game that we love. "**Bobbi Shorthouse**, whom I met at a USCA Board meeting 12 years ago is my inspiration," says Creasey. "Bobbi got me refereeing Special Olympics games at Ocean House in RI. I figured I could apply my 12 years of teaching high school students on both sides of the Atlantic to teaching Special Olympics Athletes and their Partners. It's working!"

On November 15, NCC was proud to host the first Annual Jiminy Wicket & Special Olympics of Florida Invitational Croquet Tournament. 64 of those 300 players from high schools all around Florida, including some from Naples, Jacksonville and Miami, arrived in the pouring rain at NCC for their first ever croquet tournament. Twelve NC Club members volunteered as referees and the grounds crew set up the hoops and added stripes to courts 6 and 7 to make four small courts appropriate to the skill levels of the competitors.

Pouring rain? No problem. Trash bags were found for those without rain gear, and hair dryers were activated to dry out soaked clothing. Nothing could dampen their enthusiasm.

"As they played, the kids became so excited, engaged, and happy that they did not want to stop even when rain completely soaked them," says Tom Lindley, NC Club President and volunteer at the event. "Sharing that joy was absolutely wonderful. I am thrilled and honored that our Club and the NCC were allowed to be their hosts. Sandy James deserves high praise for donating all the food and service. It was truly a community-wide effort with community-wide rewards."

One young athlete told **Suzanne Turner** that there was no reason to leave. "My group has a hotel room so we could all come back tomorrow and keep playing." Speaking of which, more is around the corner. Next year, Jiminy Wicket could be hosting students for this second annual event from more than 60 schools across the state!

Mary Galasso with Jim Creasey



Tate Russack, Jana Arnette, Special Olympics Florida, Jim Creasey and Alex Galasso



2nd Annual New Year's Eve Golf Croquet Tournament

On December 31st, the NC Club Social Committee is hosting the 2nd Annual NYE GC Tournament. This will be a casual fun tournament open to members and guests.

Entry Fee is \$75 – \$75 gets you Beer / Wine and Light Appetizers.

Prizes will be awarded to the 1st and 2nd place team
Open to the first 24 players to sign up

6pm – Meet on the veranda for team assignments
6:30pm – Tournament Toast
7 – 9pm – Play Begins
9 – 9:30pm – Drinks and Light Apps
9:30 – 11:30pm – Play Continues and Final (if Needed)
11:30 – Winners Celebration and NYE Toast

If your interested in playing please contact the front desk or email **Stephen Tasker** at stephentakter@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATES!

- Dine and Discover Luncheon, Yoga December 14th
- Holiday dinner on December 16th
- New Years Eve golf croquet tournament on December 31st
- Third Annual Women's GC Open Tournament, January 18-21



Volunteer Committee:

The Volunteer Committee is working on NCC events for December and January. To volunteer, contact **Lynn Foley or Ned Fleming** (or anyone on the Committee)! Join the awesome group of club members currently volunteering.



Diane Waterfall, Anne de Lisle, chair Lynn Foley, Ned Fleming, Susan Langston, Sheila Peterson, Jane Louise Smith, Bob Smith

ATTENTION READERS! *The Sticky Wicket* is a publication of the NC Club for its members. We will be here for you seven months plus one summer issue to keep you posted on latest games, players and ideas that make things happen.

The Sticky Wicket would like to have money to print hard copies for those who don't have emails, for visitors and for prospective members. Cost: \$960 for the year or \$120 per issue. We welcome your thoughts, suggestions and/or donations.

We would welcome your help and donation. Contact **Mary Churchill**, mcchurchill@gmail.com

NCC Holiday Tree Brings Yuletide Tradition: Let There Be Lights



Sheila Peterson

It may not be Rockefeller Plaza but the NCC Christmas tree is beautiful! Our tree is resplendent with ribbons and sparkling ornaments and, of course, jeweled strings of lights. After all, what would a Christmas tree be without lights?

The display caused quite a stir in the press. The glittery globes did not, however, become popular until the 1920s when "General Electric's pre-assembled lights became more accessible and cheaper" according to cultural historian Kerri Dean.

Franklin Pierce, the 14th U.S. President was the first to put up a Christmas tree in the White House. In 1883, Sears, Roebuck began selling artificial trees and in 1901, farmer W.V. McGaillard planted 25,000 Norway spruce trees on his New Jersey farm.

It would take until the mid-fifties for the average household to adopt the use of illumination on their trees. Today somewhere between 25 and 30 million trees are sold in the U.S. each year, most of them ultimately garlanded with necklaces of lights. Come see ours.

Sheila Peterson

The custom of decorated holiday trees is controversial. Latvia and Estonia both claim to be the site of the first Christmas trees ever. Historians believe that the first tree was erected in 1539 in the Strasbourg Cathedral. No matter. The controversy will continue. As citizens moved and resettled in other parts of Europe and then the USA, the tradition of a decorated tree came with them.

The original trees were decorated with apples, marzipan cookies, strings of popcorn and little pouches of nuts. According to legend, Protestant reformer Martin Luther was the first to put lights on the trees, albeit wax candles, in 1554. The lights, which symbolized Christ being the light of the world, were typically extinguished soon after they were lit because of the fire hazard they posed.

Thomas Edison had yet to be born in order to invent a far safer string of electrified Christmas tree lights. In 1880, Edison patented the electric bulb. However, the widespread use of electricity was still decades away.. Electricity was viewed suspiciously and lightbulbs and Christmas tree lights were far too expensive for the average wage earner.



In 1882, 'twas an associate of Thomas Edison, Edward Hibberd Johnson, part engineer, part businessman and part Barnum, had the brilliant idea of turning Edison's eccentric brainstorms into cash. He had pear shaped glass lights in red, white and blue made for him, strung the lights together and hung them on a tree rotating on a pedestal in the front parlor windows of his house thereby becoming the Father of Christmas Tree Lights.

Winter Wicket Thoughts

By Lovejoy Duryea

Wishing You
Great Croquet...



And all the joys
of the season

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Thank You



Christian, Crystal, Kathy, Marie, Scott, Jennifer, Maria, Carlos, Joe, Tiffany
Not on picture: Magda, Omero, Alfonzo, Efrain and Leandro

As we enter the NCC Clubhouse, we are continuously welcomed and supported by a fantastic team who works diligently to make our experience one of the best in the region. The members of the NC Club extend a huge **THANK YOU** to all the CFA and Sandy James employees.

Happy Holidays!



sm&h invites



Dine & Discover Series

The National Croquet Club is pleased to announce a new 'Dine & Discover' series for the 2023-2024 year. This program is for the benefit of members, guests and visitors and will be open to the public. Programs will feature speakers who are accomplished members of our community.

They will be speaking on a wide range of topics. We anticipate the program will occur at lunchtime and the intent is to enlighten, educate, entertain and add value to the National Croquet Club.

Please join us!

Save the dates:

- December 14th - 11:30am
YES! YOGA Complements Croquet by **Sara Beth**.
- January 16th - Shells from Around the World - Our own **Bob Broadway** presents his very popular lecture on Florida shells and shells from around the world.
- February 20th - **Oliver Buckton**, author of *The World is Not Enough: The Biography of Ian Fleming*, presents "The Man Who Created James Bond: The Life, Work, and Loves of Ian Fleming."
- April 2024 - Charles Schwab Presents Your Financial Future