



# THE STICKY WICKET

NOVEMBER 2025



## Croquet Foundation of America Announces Historic \$1 Million Challenge Grant and Funding for the \$250,000 Grand Pavillion

Major Gifts Will Propel the National Croquet Center from Plan to Action

In a move to support the expansion and enhancement of the **National Croquet Center (NCC)**, the **Croquet Foundation of America (CFA)** announces a matching grant of up to \$1,000,000 from an anonymous donor and Club member who has committed to match all new contributions dollar-for-dollar, including sponsorships for the Steuber, the Hall of Fame, and other naming opportunities.

This extraordinary matching grant challenge, the largest in CFA's history, marks a transformative moment for the Foundation and the Center. It will fuel critical improvements, including:

- **Expanding courts from 12 to 17**
- **25 additional parking spots**
- **New court lighting surrounding the veranda**
- **A new Grand Pavilion and other facilities**
- **Major renovations to the Headquarters & Museum (the "Clubhouse")**
- **New entry signage including Summit Blvd**



Proposed Pavillion design



Proposed Entry Sign design

"I discovered croquet later in life, and it's the best sport I've ever played," the donor stated. "Croquet is challenging, great fun, and an opportunity to meet people and make many new friends. I'm delighted to help the Center welcome more players and visitors to the sport I've grown to love."

In addition to the \$1,000,000 challenge grant, the CFA will soon receive another amazing grant: \$250,000 to build the Grand Pavillion in back of the existing courts where the NCC sign is now. That grant is from a second anonymous member-donor who commented "I'm delighted to support the Foundation's project to build The Grand Pavilion because I know what a difference it will make in everyone's enjoyment of the Center. I love its look and functionality."

This generosity is amazing and a testament as to how much they value and enjoy our unique Center. All these donations will significantly advance our mission to promote croquet and expand our ability to serve the community. (continues on page 2)

*The Sticky Wicket is a publication of the National Croquet Club  
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(cont, page 1 - \$1m grant)

As for the new courts in the back, the CFA Board has decided that the ballooning cost of \$1.6M to \$1.8M to elevate the five courts in the dry retention area is prohibitive relative to other priorities. That plan would also require further delays in construction and approvals, and we have had enough of those.

The plan now is to build four new championship courts in the dry retention area at the existing level, in addition to the recently completed Pond Court. Approval requirements are minimal and may allow construction to start before year-end. A fifth court there would require a costly, substantial retaining wall, tree removal, and other changes requiring numerous County approvals. Construction of that fifth court can still be undertaken at a later point, depending on available funds and priorities.

This change of plans means we will have substantial funds (when matched) even after the courts and court lighting are complete, to pursue numerous other projects including major projects to repair, remodel and redecorate the "Clubhouse". This will include locker rooms, bathrooms, the Ballroom, and other areas based on new priorities now being established by the CFA Board and our available funds.

We know that night play is getting more popular. Discussions are actively continuing with lighting contractors trying to resolve several technical concerns regarding pole placement, height, timing, capabilities (like dimming & remote controls), light levels achieved, directional glare toward the veranda, etc. We are working to resolve these issues.

Meanwhile, Club members who can help match funds are encouraged to contribute cash, appreciated stock, or make a tax-free direct contribution from your IRA to meet your required minimum distribution. Gifts for tournament sponsorships and court or other naming opportunities also count. Every dollar contributed will be matched, making this a unique opportunity to maximize your impact on the future of the Center and croquet in America.

While there is no specific deadline yet to achieve the match, donations received before year-end will allow us to set better priorities and to design, plan, and implement projects as soon as they have funding. For more information, see me or CFA Executive Director **Franck Meunier**.

**David McCoy**, CFA Chairman



## Club President's Column



John Strasser

### Welcome Back and New Unifying Technology Update

First, I would like to welcome many of you back as you escape the cold up north and get ready for a great season of croquet. We had a very successful AC World Championships this fall. I have been asked by many participants to pass on their appreciation and thanks to the Club for our role in supporting the tournament and 'giving up' all our courts to make it happen.

Secondly, I would like to announce that we are in negotiations with the CFA and SandyJames to invest in a unified software platform that will be able to run seamlessly all the activities on the property like food and beverage, pro shop, events and even membership. The recent changes in leadership have given us an opportunity to plan for the future and to enhance not only the member experience but grow the various business units that all work together to deliver member services and also allow us to maintain low Club dues.

The intermittent difficulties accessing the court booking system that most of us are experiencing are symptomatic of the current technology problems we are all facing. Due to their continuous software protocol changes and security updates, the multiple platforms that once made sense no longer communicate with each other or perform as originally implemented.

With one of these new unified platforms members will be able to easily view club events and RSVP directly from the app or website, even pay any costs involved. Members can also book a lesson, reserve a court, purchase pro shop items and even renew their membership. The Croquet Grill will be able to bill a single unified house account. Your house account will provide an email notification on each transaction and a monthly statement of all spending from food and beverage to pro shop, lessons, events and even dues. The communication software is run directly from the membership database so every member can update their communication preferences directly in their profile. From the club phone app, you will see all upcoming club events, member directory, court reservation system, bar and restaurant menu and more. You will even be able to order food from your phone to be ready when your game is over. There will be much more.

I am happy to announce that all the organizations (Club, Center and SandyJames) have agreed in principle to moving forward and a plan for addressing the costs is being developed with potential launch date in early Spring. Stay tuned.

John Stasser  
President, National Croquet Club



## The 2025 AC World Championship Brought Praise and Thanks to the NCC

All hail the success of the 2025 Association Croquet World Championship, hosted at the National Croquet Center in October. High energy and beautiful Florida weather filled the air as 72 top players from 16 countries competed on our very own courts, infusing the Center with skill, sportsmanship, camaraderie and a shared love of the game.



"Our goal was to create the best possible championship and make every player feel at home," said **David McCoy**, "I think we did and want to thank our Club members for their patience and enthusiasm." While some court time was limited, the excitement more than made up for it. Members filled the veranda, watched the amazing play from the clubhouse TVs, and even enjoyed the two newly manicured back lawns. Many joined in the 9-wicket intro classes led by **Bill Trower**, getting a taste of the action themselves.



Zack and James Watson

We are especially proud of **Randy Cardo**, **Stephen Morgan**, and **Zack Watson**, our Head Professional and Director of Croquet, all representing the National Croquet Club. Their topnotch play and composure on the world stage were a true reflection of the spirit of our community.

Special congratulations go to **Zack Watson**, "I set the bar very high for myself going into the 2025 Worlds", Watson said. Under the watchful eyes of his daughter and son, Lillian and James, Zack showed the poise, precision, and passion that inspire us all. He remained undefeated in the entire block play, went on to win the Shield, and climbed from #8 to #4 in the world AC rankings.

The Worlds reminded us all why we love this game, the challenge, the camaraderie, and the joy of sharing it together. Here's to an exciting season ahead!

**Franck Meunier**, Executive Director CFA



Spectators at the AC World Championship



Michael Albert (Tournament Director), Reg Bamford (2025 AC World Winner and recent National Croquet Club Member) & Bev Cardo, USCA President

## Behind the Greens



CFA Ground crew: Leo, Alfonso Sr, Efrain, Alfonso Jr, Omero

### Meet Omero, the CFA Head Superintendent and His Groundskeepers, Who Nightly Mowed for Speed, and Then Changed Hoops

The pristine condition and speed of the National Croquet Center courts caught the attention of both professional and seasoned competitors alike at the AC World championship. Thank you, **Omero Garcia**, the CFA Head Superintendent and his dedicated groundskeepers.

"We are so fortunate to have Omero and his grounds crew here," said **David McCoy**, CFA Chairman. "Their lawn preparation was so impressive that the players voluntarily took up a collection to show their appreciation, and they were brought in to big applause by the players. That's rare! They are a treasure."

Omero met the challenge of this high-profile championship. "For this event, we rolled the turf twice daily, mowed at midnight and again early in the morning, and positioned the out of bounds pipes daily," Omero said. "Then, across all 12 courts, we repositioned the Quadway hoops each day, a task once reserved for players and referees, but one we proudly took on ourselves."



Ground crew and Michael Albert

The results were nothing short of remarkable. Through careful adjustments, Omero's team achieved progressively short grass heights—from 0.140 inch to 0.120, then to 0.105, and finally to an incredible 0.100 inch (which is 100 thousandths of an inch) for the championship finals. This produced the fastest court speed ever recorded at the National Croquet Center measuring between 12 and 13 on the speed scale.

Omero was also quick to credit **Michael Albert**, USCA Tournament Director for his mentorship and support. "Michael taught us the proper way to set hoops in perfectly straight lines. He took the time to teach us, to help us, and to trust us. That made all the difference."

When he came to NCC, Omero brought with him a wealth of experience in construction, heavy equipment operation, mechanics, and golf course maintenance, but not croquet. That quickly changed. Determined to meet the demands of this unique sport, he and his staff immersed themselves in the art and science of croquet lawn maintenance. The team monitored soil conditions, used slow-release fertilizers, analyzed lab tested turf samples, and made precise adjustments to ensure the grass's health and resilience.

"My goal for the future is to cut the grass even shorter and increase the speed of the lawns. Let's see if it can be done," he said with a smile. Thanks to the dedication of Omero, his staff, and Michael's guidance, the National Croquet Center set a new standard for excellence.

With the knowledge, tools, and passion now in place, the future of championship croquet at the National Croquet Center has never looked greener or faster.

## Franck Meunier Joins the CFA Staff

### New Post Sparks New Ideas

The face and that friendly smile are very familiar, but the job behind the man is all new. Yes, we have a brand-new face in the office: Executive Director **Franck Meunier**, who has moved from avid player to administrator of the Croquet Federation of America (CFA) and the National Croquet Center (the facilities). That puts him in a new position with responsibilities for the three tenants: the USCA, the Club and its membership, and SandyJames caterers. He reports directly to the CFA Board, and will serve ex-officio on the CFA and Club Boards. Franck has replaced and added duties to the post of Manager **Marie Sweetser**, who married, then retired from her post this summer after 15 years as General Manager. Thank you, Marie, for your hard work and loyal dedication to the Club.

"I'm in heaven pinching myself," says Franck with a smile in his charming French accent. "This is a dream job that is the perfect continuation of my career in business development and administration of international franchise companies, developing and expanding memberships in the fitness world. I love the people here, and the venue where I come to work every day in this beautiful place. It's magic. The first challenge was to help host the AC World Championship. It was so exciting every day."

Franck has two Masters on his resume to add to his considerable business experience. His goals? "I want to increase the Center revenue, Club membership, emphasize the health benefits of croquet, extend our outreach to new groups to make them aware of croquet, as a social or competitive sport. I also want to make everything fun, as much fun as possible. Isn't that why we are here? For the fun."

Born in France, Franck came to the US in 1994 to Chicago to be with his partner and now husband, **John Strasser**. Moving to Florida in 2016, they discovered the Summer League in 2020 where they came in last. Undeterred, they had fun, and were completely hooked. They joined the Club right away. Since then, Franck has been active on the membership committee, Civility and Revenue Task Forces, volunteered for events and visitors' clinics and most important, does the layout for the Sticky Wicket.

"The opportunities to expand our reach for all ages, to help grow the game of croquet here and in the US are so inviting. My list is long and I can't wait to tackle it every day. Imagine that!" he says, smiling.

We are happy too. Sometimes things just happen serendipitously. Lucky us.

***Mary Churchill***



Franck Meunier



## OUR CLUB NEW MEMBERS

The Membership Committee and National Croquet Club are delighted to welcome our new Club members:

**Jason Collins, Frank & Katherine Conway, Patricia Dowling, Dennis & Terry Fisher, Arturo Galvez, Glorana Ghegan, Alan Greenberg, Constance Murrin, Catherine & Nicholas Noviello, David & Johanna Quinlan, David Samuels, Louis Urban, William & Debbie Wunder and Reg Bamford (winner of the 2025 AC World Tournament)**

## CFA & National Croquet Club Announce Health and Wellness Task Force

Playing Croquet at the National Croquet Center is like “preaching to the choir”. We all love the game, the competition and the lifestyle. Although, not to minimize the obvious, we are in the process of shifting our focus on our sport of choice into a powerful opportunity to look at how croquet can also be relevant to our health, well-being and longevity rather than just competition. We will be looking at Croquet as a “Low-Impact, High-Engagement” Wellness activity and offer our members related articles on a monthly basis that will help keep us active, social and outdoors – for life! The National Croquet Center is a hub for holistic well-being, not just a sports venue.

The CFA is launching a Health & Wellness Task Force. We will be highlighting the physical benefits: balance, coordination, light cardio, posture improvement, and careful outdoor Vitamin D exposure. We will also be promoting the mental wellness of croquet by offering stress relief, mindfulness and tactical thinking elements. Older adults who seek gentle fitness and like-minded socialization, younger professionals wanting mindful recreation and families looking for intergenerational activities can all be obtained here at the National Croquet Club. Croquet is the sport with mindful movement for active living in a beautiful surrounding, at any age, resulting in balance, focus and friendship on and off the lawns.

If you are interested in joining the CFA the Health & Wellness Task Force, please reach out to **Franck Meunier**.

**Bruce Hindin, D.O.**

scan or point your camera  
to the QR code



Or go to following link:  
[facebook.com/nationalcroquetclub](https://facebook.com/nationalcroquetclub)

scan or point your camera  
to the QR code



Or look for following handle:  
[@nationalcroquetclubWPB](https://@nationalcroquetclubWPB)

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

# Save the Dates

NATIONAL CROQUET CLUB'S

### UPCOMING SOCIAL EVENTS

- November 11 - December 14<sup>th</sup> Toy drive
- November 18<sup>th</sup> Team Trivia Pub Night
- December 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
"Holiday Sing a Long"
- December 20<sup>th</sup> Holiday Dinner Party
- December 27<sup>th</sup> Boxing Day Party
- December 31<sup>st</sup> New Year's Eve GC Game Night
- January 9<sup>th</sup> Lunch & Learn Kim Jones  
"Turtle Lecture"
- January 22<sup>nd</sup> Club Cocktail Party
- February 14<sup>th</sup> Bunco Party

WATCH FOR EVENT FLYERS WITH  
DETAILS & SIGN UPS ON THE VERANDA!

## Grand Opening New Court!

Court #13, "Pond court", "Pro Court", practice court.... All eyes on the new court.

The NCC is putting the final touches  
on the new court.

**Grand Opening on Saturday Nov. 29**



### HOLIDAY SINGALONG

With piano playing by **Joanne Rose**  
Thursday December 11  
starting at 5:30 pm in the Lounge  
Thank you Marianne Davidson!

Come join in and sing your favorite  
holiday songs accompanied by beautiful  
piano music.

All welcome

Food and drinks available for purchase at  
Croquet Grill



## Goblins came out on Halloween night for game and potluck

