

The 2019 WCF (Simon Carter) Golf Croquet World Championship:



Sussex County Club (Southwick); Compton (Eastbourne); West Worthing, *and*
The Royal Tunbridge Wells Croquet Club
26th July – 4th August 2019

The 13th Golf Croquet World Championship, returned to England after eight years, and for 7 days the **Royal Tunbridge Wells Croquet Club** shared the hosting of the Competition! The Club was selected mainly for the quality of its lawns, its relative proximity to the Sussex County Croquet Club at Southwick, and its friendly reputation.

From Australia to Uruguay, the USA to Latvia and Finland, the finest golf croquet players from around the globe descended on Tunbridge Wells!

This was the fourth time England has hosted the event, which has taken place 13 times since 1996, with the first eight championships having been won by the Egyptians. The game has been greatly and positively influenced by the Egyptians and the WCF rules have in turn been adapted to reflect this. Now the rest of the world is catching up with the Egyptians who once dominated the golf croquet game.



Reg Bamford from South Africa was the defending champion for the 2019 Championship.



There were 80 players from 19 different countries represented at the tournament. The largest contingents were 16 players from England, 16 from Egypt, 7 from the United States, 6 from Australia, 5 from New Zealand and 5 from Spain. There were 2 players from Scotland, and 2 from Wales. Sometimes just one player was badged for their country: e.g. Pierre Beaudry of Belgium, Wolfgang Usbeck of Germany, Lars Boman of Finland, Robert Stafekis of Latvia, Dusan Turcer of Portugal, Joi Elebo of Sweden, Ian Sexton of Switzerland, and Fernando Bonilla from Uruguay.

The Championship was a singles event (with three follow-on consolation events). There were 8 blocks of 10 players. Each match consisted of the best of three 13 point games, followed by a knockout involving the top 4 players from each block (with play-offs for qualification if required). From the quarter-finals onwards matches were based on the best of five games.

All the players had some of their earlier games on the Tunbridge Wells lawns; and players who did not qualify for the knockout stage of the Championship were able to proceed to the Plate Event – also on our lawns on the Thursday and Friday. Some of the players were really young, e.g. Euan Burrridge – only 17 years – who was to win The Plate, and Jamie Gumbrell of Australia who was just 18 years old.



Throughout the week it was a privilege to watch truly top class play in Tunbridge Wells. In particular we saw Mohammed Kareem, Ahmed Al Mahdi, Fathi Farouk, Hamy Erian, Abeer Mostafa, Ahmed Nasr, Mohamed Nasr, Euan Burrridge, Tim King, Stephen Mulliner, Jonathan Powe, Joshua Freeth, Reg Bamford (beaten by Josh in Tunbridge Wells), Andres Alvarez Sala, Rafael Romero (“the bull”!), and Ben Rothman.



The accuracy of clearances from the distance, particularly of balls near a hoop, was amazing; and there were some spectacular jump shots. One in particular by Ben Rothman jumped the middle peg and ended up many metres away scoring the red hoop!

In the semi-finals it was sad to see Joshua Freeth of New Zealand eliminated, because he had perhaps been the most outstanding player we had seen on the Tunbridge Wells lawns.

Ben Rothman (above), from the United States of America, won the WCF Simon Carter Golf Croquet World Championship at 17.06 on Sunday 4th August. He beat Mohammed Kareem of Egypt, in a classic final of great hitting and hoop running. It was 7-5, 2-7, 3-7, 7-6, 7-5 after nearly 6 hours of play; and they were very close. Mohammed lost the match by only two games.

I had previously watched Mohammed Kareem playing in Tunbridge Wells, where I had also seen Ben Rothman beat both Omar Fahmy and Nour Ali of Egypt. We all have our prejudices, and I was deeply disappointed that Mohammed Kareem did not finally win. It seemed that it should be Egypt’s turn again. All week their play had been exciting and beautiful to watch. Mohammed had calmly proceeded through the final six hours, and had not continually complained or called for a referee.

Michael Sander
5 August 2019

Ashdown Probus Croquet takes place on the second Tuesday of the Summer months (April to September) and is open to all members and their wives/partners who are invited to join the group for a friendly, gentle, morning's activity. If you are interested in joining the Croquet group please contact the organiser, **Michael Sander** who may be contacted by e-mail msanderuk@gmail.com or via the Contact page of the Club website. www.ashdownprobus.org.uk