

MALLET MADNESS



© 2006, Croquet Your Way; Photography by Jack Dyson

SWINGING THE SILLY STICKS FOR A GOOD CAUSE

STORY BY J.T. LANDRY

SIT back, close your eyes and imagine with me what must be the most famous croquet match ever recorded.

If you remember correctly, it was really quite a fantastic sight. It was in a rose garden, a white rose garden to be exact ... except, there were gardeners painting the roses red. The crowd was certainly elite. A great many kings and queens and various members of the royal court, including courtiers, a knave, children and a rather nasty queen were all in attendance, as well as an extremely out-of-place little girl who seemed to have "dropped in" from who knows where.

Is it coming back to you yet?

The most bizarre aspect of the afternoon was the game itself. While croquet is usually played with wooden mallets, balls and steel wickets, this particular game featured live flamingos, live hedgehogs, and soldiers who were forced to get on their hands and feet and arch their backs so that the hedgehogs could roll underneath them! It was very chaotic of course. The hedgehogs

were fairly unreliable, the flamingos were quite stubborn, and the queen was being very nasty indeed, calling for various people's heads. This famous scene from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* depicts a vivid vision of croquet craziness. Mallet madness indeed.

While there will doubtfully be any hedgehog balls or soldier wickets, O'More College of Design's upcoming Mallet Madness tournament is sure to be a croquet extravaganza. This year's event, the second annual, will be held on Saturday, Sept. 15, at O'More's campus on South Margin Street.

More than just a tournament, Mallet Madness encompasses a weekend of activity. The weekend begins with a special "Croquet Soiree" and silent auction on the evening of Sept. 14 at the historic Abbey Leix Mansion on O'More's historic campus. Tournament Day will kick off on Saturday morning, where a slew of simultaneous games will begin whittling down the playing field. Abbey Leix Mansion again becomes the weekend focal point in

© 2006, Croquet Your Way; Photography by Jack Dyson



the afternoon, where the remaining teams will compete for two very impressive purses as well as winners' bragging rights.

Last year's inaugural Mallet Madness tournament was a rousing success by all standards, drawing 48 teams and raising money for O'More's scholarship program. The teams, both amateur and professional, came to play serious croquet, with some amateurs even giving professionals a literal run for their money. One amateur group in particular, Team Haggard, was only a couple of strokes shy of defeating a local professional team. Organizers of this year's tournament are looking to build on past success and take the event to the next level.



© 2006, Croquet Your Way; Photography by Jay Lamison

DID YOU KNOW?!

CROQUET'S ORIGINS ARE ROOTED IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH ISLES. MILTON BRADLEY (YES, THAT MILTON BRADLEY) PATENTED THE AMERICAN RULES OF PLAY IN THE 1870S AND, EVER SINCE, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS HAVE PLAYED CROQUET IN BACKYARDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THE UNITED STATES CROQUET ASSOCIATION WAS FOUNDED IN 1977 TO SOLIDIFY RULES OF PLAY AND PROMOTE THE GAME OF CROQUET IN THE AMERICA.

THE ASSOCIATION'S WORK HAS DEFINITELY PAID OFF IN THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE THAT ARE PLAYING CROQUET ON OVER 600 GREENS IN NORTH AMERICA. THE LAST 30 YEARS HAS WITNESSED A CROQUET RENAISSANCE OF SORTS, AND FRANKLIN IS QUICKLY BECOMING NO EXCEPTION TO THAT RULE.

"It's going to be awesome," says Merry Sedlak, Mallet Madness chairwoman. "Last year, we had such a good response from the community that this year we're making it bigger and more evenly matched, separating the professionals from the amateurs."

Sedlak expects the new divisions to help generate an increase in team participation. Tournament officials estimate roughly 20-25 professional teams and 40-45 amateur teams will participate.

With registration fees of \$300 per team, the professional division boasts a \$1,500 team purse. This fee includes admittance to the Friday evening gala as well as breakfast, refreshments, and a barbecue lunch on tournament day. The amateur division boasts a \$1,000 team purse with registration fees of \$150 per team. Amateur fees also include breakfast refreshments, and a barbecue lunch on tournament day, as well as a t-shirt. All amateur division participants will also receive a nine-wicket membership in the United States Croquet Association (USCA). Adding to the excitement, this year's tournament is also serving as the 2007 USCA Nine Wicket Southeast Regional Championship.

This September, leave your flamingos and hedgehogs in Wonderland, and, whether you're a professional or an amateur, come out and join in the fun of a fabulous Franklin event, and croquet for a good cause.

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN REGISTERING FOR MALLET MADNESS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT MERRY SEDLAK AT [MSED LAK@OMORECOLLEGE.EDU](mailto:m Sedlak@omorecollege.edu) OR CALL 615.794.4254.