

# PHYLLIS COURT CROQUET

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The  
Committee member  
i/c this web site is:  
**Chris Roberts**  
079 7378 7710

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### 30 August - Allim wins a National Title!

Raouf Allim won the National Selectors Second Eight tournament last weekend to bring a National title back to Phyllis Court for the first time in three seasons. The 'Eights' sit in a trio of top-class tournaments at the panicle of UK croquet, just behind the British Open and the English Singles Championship and they bring together the best players in the country, this time at Southwick, near Brighton. The tournament is played as best-of-three matches throughout and is a real test of concentration and stamina with the first phase being a seven match 'all play all' block over two and a half days, followed by same length matches for the semis and final. The blocks were very close indeed with only Sidmouth's Stuart M Smith's five match wins assuring him of qualification for the second phase ahead of the last round of block games. The rest of the field bar one, were all tied on three match wins each with one to play, effectively creating a knock-out situation in all but name. Allim was amongst those tied, along with Phyllis Court club mate **Chris Roberts**, and they faced the experience of Ashby's Tim King and flamboyance of Dulwich's Guy Scurfield respectively. King put up a good fight and got a game off Allim before succumbing and Roberts played out a three-and-a-half-hour epic with Scurfield, which again went to a deciding game, but this time the result went against the Henley player. Allim stepped up a gear in his semi to get last Steve Leonard of Winterbourne Valley 7-5, 7-6 and then had two terrific games with Scurfield in the final, both of which went to final hoop for 7-6, 7-6 victory, earning Allim the converted Kate Jones Memorial Glass Trophy. Having missed the cut for the semis by one match win, Roberts did well to win the plate event and finish fifth overall, the management of Phyllis Court duo Frances Colman and Chris Roberts.

### Quartet head for All England Finals

Ian Norris, Robin Coates, Patricia Mulcahy and Roberts have all qualified for the GC All England Handicap National Final at Hamptworth on 12-31 September.

### Looking further ahead - Goldring, Lilley and Morton will all be in National Finals action

And in three weeks' time on 19-20 September, Lilley and Steve Moron play in the C-level Series (7+) National Final at Colchester, while at the same time, Roger Goldring hopes to make a mark at the top-class English National Singles Championship at Southport, Merseyside.

### 25 August - Rick Lilley reaches 'last four' of three season-long competitions

As Phyllis Court's internal croquet knock-out competitions continue to be completed with unusual yet very welcome dispatch, the semi-finalists in the four playing levels are beginning to emerge. Top performer at this stage is undoubtedly Rick Lilley who has reached the 'last four' of the 3+, 7+ and Handicap competitions, and seen his own handicap automatically reduce for 10 to 8 this season.

### Allim and Roberts head for National Selection "Eights"

This weekend there is no rest at the top of Phyllis Court Croquet with Allim and Roberts competing in the three-day National Selectors Second Eight at Southwick, while Goldring learnt this week that he has earned a place in the blue riband English National Singles Championship tournament, for the Ascot Cup, in mid-September at Southport, Merseyside.

### Four PCC players in Inter-Courties action

Oxfordshire beat all comers bar one to finish runners-up at the Golf Croquet Inter-Countries Championship second division tournament last weekend. **Phyllis Court Croquet had four players in action at Cheltenham, with Raouf Allim, Chris Roberts and Roger Goldring representing Oxfordshire** along with Eynsham and High Wycombe member Stephen Wright, while Phyllis Court club mate **Richard Peperell** represented **Berkshire**. Oxfordshire caused a bit of a stir even before play when, taking advantage of a recent Croquet Association ruling to allow coloured playing strips, they emerged in blue for the tournament, to the envy of other sides who hadn't thought of it. Oxon got off to a great start by beating a Croquet Association Select team 5-2 on Saturday morning and followed that with a same score victory over a strong Devon side that included British Open semi-finalist Stuart M Smith, who was well beaten by both Allim and Roberts. As the sunshine disappeared in the afternoon to be replaced by a howling gale that seriously affected long mallet swings, Oxon stumbled initially against Peperell's Berkshire side which looked weaker on paper than they turned out to be on grass. Allim and Roberts scraped a 4-3 timed win over Peperell and doubles partner Joe King of Blewbury, and the Roberts/King singles rubber was also a long and protracted affair eventually won on time by the Oxon player. After that it was one-way traffic as Oxon won the match comfortably 6-1 to retain a share of the lead with Leicestershire and Hertfordshire. The latter lined up as Oxon's opponents in the fourth and final round of Day 1 with two unbeaten records at stake as the blustery afternoon lead into a cold and rainy evening.

Roberts missed a 'sitter' at hoop 9 and with it went the chance of a commanding lead and eventually a game win against Watford's Nick Archer and he was victim to the best shot of the day in losing to Letchworth's John Noble who played a jump shot over two balls to clear Roberts' scoring ball on the fourth bounce!  
Oxon lost that match 2-5 to Hertfordshire but still sat in a solid second place overnight in this all-play-all tournament.  
On Sunday, Leicestershire put up good resistance but were beaten 5-2 by Oxon, who were confident of sweeping aside hosts Gloucestershire who had had a poor first day. However, the Westcountry team fielded a much-changed line up on Day 2, drafting in Great Britain AC International Mark Suter and Women's AC World Championship semi-finalist Sarah Hayes.  
Oxon, captain Roger Goldring made light of Suter's high ranking status and beat him with a quite brilliant tight angled jump shot at hoop 12 that drew praise from Suter himself, and Goldring will take the credit for softening-up Suter for team mate Allim to beat him as well straight afterwards, both results contributing you yet another 5-2 match win.  
The importance of the previous evening's loss to Hertfordshire now loomed large as Oxon's destiny was out of their own hands, knowing that a predicted victory in the last round versus Buckinghamshire would not be enough unless Gloucestershire could summon an unlikely win to ruin Herefordshire's unblemished winning record.  
Oxon duly dispatched Bucks 6-1, including a 25 plus stroke two-ball stymie in the game between Roberts and National Coach of the Year Ian Shore of High Wycombe. This brought to the fore the best tactical battle of the weekend, which the Phyllis Court eventually worked to a game winning advantage, and it was quite a hard worked way for Roberts to achieve a handicap reduction to minus three for the first time in his career.  
Hertfordshire were not to be denied, won their last match convincingly and deservedly claimed the Division 2 Shield with an undefeated record, with Oxon in a clear second place on six match wins from seven.  
Peperell's Berkshire were not disgraced and record three match wins to finish joint fourth as news came through that Somerset had won the Division 1 title at Southwick, near Brighton.

#### [18 August - Phyllis Court Quartet qualify for All England Final](#)

Four Phyllis Court players qualified to play in a National Finals last week and this when the Henley club staged two qualifying rounds for the GC All England Handicap competition. Both events attracted a wide range of abilities that were evened out by croquet's extra-turns system of handicapping which produced closely fought-out encounters throughout. In **Tournament number 1** however, the two qualification places were eventually secured by low handicapper players with top seed Ian Norris (handicap 0) and Robin Coates (1) showing good patience to see-off all the extra turns of their less experienced opponents.  
There were good showings from Madeleine Probert (9), at last returning to some form and Carl Billson (12) in his first tournament.  
Billson and seasoned campaigner Michael Christmas (6) were unlucky to miss-out on the tournament's second phase on net hoops having drawn on game wins with other first round qualifiers, however Christmas put that disappointment aside to win three times more in the afternoon to finish in a strong fifth place.

**Tournament number 2** was just as close, with both morning blocks failing to provide winners on game victories alone, so again net hoops decided the qualifiers for the second phase.

Roger Goldring (-1) and Kevin Ward (12) dipped out on the maths as Chris Roberts (-2), Dianne Browne (3), Hugh Crook (5) and tournament debutant Patricia Mulcahy (12) went through to the second phase.

Browne was undefeated thereafter, winning the event with a long and protracted deciding game victory on hottest day of the year, as Roberts ran out of ways to extract her extra turns without cost.

The two tournament winners Norris and Browne will contest a play-off final for the Phyllis Court White Ball Trophy at a later date, and will be joined by fellow qualifiers Coates and Roberts at the GC All England Handicap Final at Hamptworth, near Salisbury on 12-13 September.

#### [B-Level Series 'Smokey's Cup' - oh so close for Browne and Iyer](#)

Browne actually came to with in a whisker of qualifying for a second National Final last week, when she was beaten in to second place the Phyllis Court heat of the National B-Level Series, a level play competition for players with handicaps of 3 or more.

Going into the final round of seven, she could tie for the lead if she could overcome clubmate Raghu Iyer (3) who himself was in contention for the tournament win after a stellar performance to open the day with five wins in a row.

But his star faded in the final two rounds and Browne won their crucial last round head to head game 7-6.

Any other score line would have given one of the Phyllis Court pair the tournament win, and a ticket to the National Final, but with Browne's late charge only enough to tie on game wins with Phil Davies of Reigate, it was out with the tournament manager's calculator again.

Browne and Davies tied on game win AND net hoops, and so the head to head game result was used as the decider and Davies was declared the winner by that slimmest of margins.

Browne earned six national competition points for her second place finish and that might yet be enough for her to creep into the National Final at Roehampton on 5-6 September, if other tournament results around the country go her way.

#### [7 August - Visitors come from afar for our B-level Series 'Smokey's Cup' tournament](#)

Today and tomorrow sees the staging of Phyllis Court's re-configured contribution to the National B-Level Series of tournaments (for players with handicaps of 3+) which has attracted 13 visiting players from as far afield as Northampton, Gloucestershire and Somerset.

Covid-19 gathering restrictions have meant that special arrangements have been put in place for two single-day 8-player tournaments, rather than the traditional two-day 16-player festival for the converted Smokey's Cup.

Raghu Iyer, Dianne Browne and Bill Pitkeathley will fly the flag for Phyllis Court in the Saturday tournament, with the prize that the winners from both days will qualify for the National B-Level Final at Roehampton on 11 and 12 September.

#### [7 August - Richard Owne scores the 'result of the week' \(season-long competitions update\)](#)

Our internal season-long knock-out competitions continued to proceed at a pace with the 'result of the week' tag going to Richard Owen (handicap 8) for his level play defeat for Christine Searle (7) in the 7+ Singles, closely followed by Patricia Mulcahy (12) who took Jeff Smith (8) to the last hoop of their deciding game before succumbing to the senior man.

[7 August - Norris and Pitkeathley dropp handicaps](#)

Automatic Handicap reductions were recorded this week by Ian Norris (0 to -1) and Bill Pitkeathley (7 to 6).