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WCC chairman John Schultz watches as 2013 winner John Conrad signs the back of the official crokinole board for the second year in a row.

Conrad repeats as WCC champ

Like all great crokinole players, John Conrad brings his best game to the final round. He successfully defended his 2012 World Crokinole Championship title Saturday, June 1, 2013 in Tavistock for the 15th annual tournament.

"Because of the humidity it was tough all day," he said of the playing conditions at the 15th annual competition held in the Tavistock and District Recreation Centre. "You had to learn to adapt, but the boards were all good," he admitted.

Conrad placed 9th in the preliminary round to make it into the top 16 round robin playoff. From there he trailed 14th place Raymond Haymes of Wainfleet by one point. The two went into the final round where Conrad pulled off a 10-6 win in the best of three games.

"I didn't win anything all year," Conrad said of his battles during area tournaments in National Crokinole Association play. But in the end, he walked away with the 2013 adult singles championship and \$1,000 cash.

Raymond Beierling of Dorchester placed third in singles by defeating fourth place Tom Johnston of Varna 9-5. Beierling also took home the 20's trophy with a total of 99 in the preliminary round.

Earlier in the day, Conrad and

his doubles partner Tony Snyder of London placed second overall. First place in the doubles competition went to the father and son team of Fred and Justin Slater of Toronto in the 36-team competition. Justin is the 2010 singles champion, but failed to make it into the final four this year. Three time champion Brian Cook (2007, 2008, 2009) was also denied a run at the championship trophy this year. He said, "It's not how many good shots you have, it's limiting the bad ones. You have to forget the bad shots and move on."

Another three-time champion, Joe Fulop of Exeter, also made an appearance Saturday playing in the singles category. Mr. Fulop is one of the most talented players associated with the tournament, even though he is confined to a wheelchair and has trouble with his eyesight. He won the titles in 2001, 2002 and 2004, and placed in the top four in 2000, 2005, and 2007.

The popular cues categories this year saw a new singles winner as Wayne Kipfer of Millbank took home the award. Carol Litt and Lorraine Proud, both of Kitchener, once again captured the cue doubles title for

the second straight year. In recreational doubles, Kathy Carter and Jason Carter of Newton were victors.

It was truly an international tournament this year with registration up to 297 participants. Players travelled by land and air to play with the best. Eight people attended from

25th. Darryl MacDonald, formerly of Kingston, P.E.I., but now running an internet company in Hamilton, placed 39th overall.

Demian Johnston and his son, Kieran, 10, from Stamford, Connecticut were first time attendees and were really excited to be playing in the world championship. Demian said it was a "challenge" trying to explain the game of crokinole to his co-workers who have never ever heard of anything like crokinole. Demian is interested in finding out more about the culture of the game and comparing his experience to what he saw in the crokinole movie. He's established an online friendship with Nathan Walsh and others and put up a web site dedicated to the game which he is calling "knipsbrat", a German variation on the name crokinole. He had t-shirts made up for the event with the name and website on the back.

Chemical engineer Wilf Olson drove from Regina, Saskatchewan, to attend the tournament. Wilf and his son, Nic, 24, made the 2,300 km trip by car and they weren't disappointed. Wilf placed 10th in the preliminary round of singles play. He and his two sons play regularly on boards that have been in the family for years. "My grandfather played and my dad makes really nice boards," he

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- John Conrad, 2013 WCC Champion

Columbiana, Ohio; others from Lewiston, New York; Stamford, Connecticut; Utica, Michigan; Miami, Florida; a father and son from Regina, Saskatchewan; and a dozen enthusiasts from Prince Edward Island.

David Younker of Kingston, P.E.I. said he has bringing fellow island players to the tournament since 2002. "I enjoy the camaraderie," he said. "People here treat us so well," he added. "It's a chance to play with the best in the world." Back in Hunter River, P.E.I. the group meets every other Thursday evening in the community hall for crokinole and socializing. Out of 86 players in the singles category this year, P.E.I. player Ewen McPhail ranked 20th and Lawson Lea,

said. They had been planning on coming to the Tavistock championship for the past few years. They also made up their own t-shirts (they had to get 25 made and sold them to friends and co-workers) with the label "crokin-Olsons".

Also attending were the Cunsolo-Pavlove family from Guelph. Debby, the mom, said they were all set to come to the tournament 10 years ago but their baby came early and they missed out. They've been trying to come every year since, but seemingly something precludes it every year. This year was the year as son David and daughter Amanda played in the junior singles category while Debby and Amanda along with Andrew and David also played in recreational doubles.

Other winners on the day included junior champion Abijah Jong of Hamilton. He also placed fourth in the intermediate category when an odd number of players registered and the category needed one more player. The intermediate winner was Trevor Grasby of Holland Landing. The recreational singles title went to Oliver Davidson of Sebringville.

Denis Grignon, a freelance reporter, played along with Nancy Payne and their two boys, Yannick and Noah. Denis said he really wants to understand more about the culture of the game and the dynamics of the day as he is researching for a story on the most popular parlour game in Canada. It will be aired on CBC radio during Canada Day weekend. His story in the Toronto Star on Thursday, May 30, 2013 precludes the tournament and helps raise awareness of the game countrywide. Videographer Ken Milmine of CTV Kitchener was also there to record the action. A report aired on the CTV Kitchener news Saturday night at 11:30 narrated by Krista Simpson.

When totalling and adding each category, there were 446 players in this year's competition.

East Zorra-Tavistock Mayor Don McKay welcomed everyone and stressed that the day was about having fun and making new friends. He introduced the players attending from a distance and made special mention of the volunteers who keep the tournament running every year as well as the sponsors who donate prizes. Draws were held throughout the day and the winner of the official crokinole board was Ronnie Haymes of Paisley. Ken Wettlaufer was the event's announcer.

Beverly Vaillancourt of Penetanguishene was awarded the Karin Jeske Memorial Trophy as the top female in the tournament.

