

## LETTER TO THE WORLD CROKINOLE CHAMPIONSHIP

# DAYS OF WINE & CROKINOLE

June 1, 2015  
by Greg Pinel  
Brooklyn, New York

The story of how I heard about the World Crokinole Championship tournament is a long one. Although I'm Canadian, I hadn't heard of crokinole until I moved to Brooklyn. I was introduced to the game by a professional heavy metal drummer, Santos, from New Mexico. He had learned of the game and, more importantly, how to play it and also - most importantly - how to make boards, when he was a teenager in Sante Fe, New Mexico. Santos, now in his late 30s, acquired his knowledge from two rather eccentric brothers from Canada who had moved down to Sante Fe from Quebec to care for their elderly mother.

I convinced Santos, who also lives in Brooklyn, to make some boards so that we could grow the game here. I was convinced we could get a decent following pretty quickly. So now, every Thursday night, I run an informal crokinole night at a great and quirky Italian wine bar in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. We typically get more than 20 people every Thursday, playing singles and doubles on four to six boards.

Once every two or three months I run a single-night tournament with wine for prizes. To attempt to sell the competitive side of the game, I've told many people about the World Crokinole Championship (which I learned of while studying the game). And, as it turns out, some WCC players have come by the wine bar a couple of times.

The biggest addict I've created in all this is the southern Italian owner of the wine bar, a chap named Tommaso. Tommaso will be coming along with me to the WCC. We'll be driving up in a vintage Italian car from Brooklyn and will be filming the adventure. A New York journalist has already started a small film project on our crokinole adventures and our coverage from the trip and the tournament will be added to her work.

That's the fun part. There's also a serious part. The crokinole tournaments I run here in Brooklyn have a greater purpose than just getting people together to play this great game. I use the proceeds for an after-school sports program that I run for local, under-



Greg Pinel (left) and Tammaso Mazzoni of Brooklyn, New York inspect one of the Lagasse Brothers Pichenotte Game Board Co. boards on display at the 17th Annual World Crokinole Championship held on Saturday, June 6, 2015 in Tavistock.

served youth. Ideally, I want to get an after-school crokinole session going for students who don't have anywhere to go or anything else to do once school is out. Unfortunately, that's a majority of NYC's 1.2 million public school students.

Unlike Canadian public schools, there's often a great difference in service provision amongst public schools in the US. In short, one NYC high school can have 41 after-school sports teams and another school, just a mile or two away, can have nothing. This occurs because of a gross inequity in the distribution of government funds to schools -- according to the amount of funds generated by property tax in a given school's neighbourhood. Schools in high property tax neighbourhoods receive relatively greater

funding than schools in low property tax areas.

My adult sports programs ([www.nysoccerproject.com](http://www.nysoccerproject.com)) and my crokinole tournaments raise funds for those schools that get very little, if any, government money for after-school activities. My school programs can be seen here: [www.nyisl.com](http://www.nyisl.com).

If my tournaments can grow I'll, of course, be able to raise more money for kids in need. Ideally, this will also grow the great game of crokinole itself -- especially if I can introduce it as an after-school activity available to the largest school district in America. Given my connections with schools here, I shouldn't have a problem of getting the game going in one or two venues. Our film showing off the game in the country of its creation will increase the chances of

creating a movement here!

I feel I should also add that my principle motivation hasn't yet been revealed ... and that isn't filming the project for a greater cause but simply to be a winner at the World Crokinole Championship tournament! Though Tommaso has his eyes on the prize, too. First, as a doubles team, we're hoping for a dream final: the two of us against the Beirerling brothers. (The Jamaican bobsled team of the WCC, if you like!). And a fantasy singles final: Tommaso vs. me. First, though, we have to get to Tavistock in this old car.

**Greg shared his story with the audience during one of the breaks in competition on Saturday. The WCC Committee, in turn, donated a board to his after-school program.**

## Slater... (continued from page 1)

to Paul Weber and Oscar Weber. Consolation Recreational Doubles winners announced were Randy and Bill Harris. Second place went to Kyle Vaillancourt and Mike Yourk; third place to Dwayne and Christina Campbell; and fourth place to Harold Ruffenbach and Marty Vamos.

Early bird registration official WCC jacket draw winners were Deb Westerhof of Wellington, Ontario and Roger Vaillancourt of Penetanguishene. The Karin Jeske Memorial Award generously sponsored by Hans Reinhold, Germany, for the Adult Singles Top Female for the second year was Beverly Vaillancourt, Penetanguishene.

The oldest entrants in this year's competition were Bill Harris of Southampton and Lorraine Proud of Kitchener. The youngest were boy - Manoah Jong, 5, Hamilton and girl - Sydney Grant, 8, St. Marys.

A table of donated items was raffled with the official WCC crokinole board going to Bill Mungall of Guelph. The 50/50 draw winner was Henry Veltkamp of Kitchener.

Some WCC facts and trivia this year compiled by registration convenor Sherrill Calder include a total of 437 players registered. There were 81 new players in 2015 making up 28% of the total players registered. Twenty-six of these players came from the US (8 Wisconsin, 6 New York, 2 Connecticut, 6 Ohio, 1 Texas, 1 Colorado, 1 South Carolina, and 1 Kentucky). Two brothers from the US, one from Texas and 1 from South Carolina, partnered to play crokinole in Tavistock on a repeat visit. The Canadian player coming the farthest distance was from Winnipeg, Manitoba and the player coming the farthest distance within Ontario was from Ottawa. The most "local" players were from Kitchener, then Guelph, and then Waterloo. The most common surnames in this year's competition were Westerhof, then Brubacher, then Jong. But the best doubles pairing for the day was "Shortt and Sweet" featuring Richard Shortt and Brian Sweet of New Hamburg.



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