

LONGMEADOW PCQ/NRT TOURNAMENT SUMMARY

Du Randt/Morneau take Longmeadow NRT

The Longmeadow PCQ/NRT was played on January 10th in clear and cold weather conditions. The field of 24 teams was strong and featured the two top ranked players, 6 of the top 31 teams, and most of players from the defending champion Region 2 President's Cup team. Johan Du Randt and Mark Parsons took a much needed break from each other and teamed up with different partners – Du Randt with tournament co-director Jeff Morneau – and Parsons with his former partner Brian O'Connor. Parsons stated before the event “It's been a while since I have had the chance to hit any overheads in a tournament so I'm really looking forward to this weekend.” The early rounds went as expected with a few three-set matches.

The quarter-finals in the lower half of the draw featured Parsons / O'Connor v. Kahler / Stulac. There was a clear plan by Kahler / Stulac to test “the mental giant” O'Connor – and they did. Unfortunately for Kahler / Stulac, O'Connor was up to the challenge and was able to carry Parsons through to the semi-finals. O'Connor stated after the match “We have kissed and made up but I still don't know why Parsons dumped me a few years ago . . . I'm still hoping we can get back together.”

The quarter-final match between Montalbano / Gaetz v. Du Randt / Morneau was fast paced and featured outstanding shot making by all players. Du Randt / Morneau pulled through after two tough sets which set up a semi-final match featuring Du Randt and Parsons on opposite sides of the court for the first time in years. The semi-final match was dominated by the action packed play of Du Randt with Morneau doing exactly what Du Randt told him to do – “just serve the ball in the box, hit the return over the net, and stay in your alley or out of bounds.” Morneau listened ... and it led to solid victory. Parsons quipped after the match “don't let the score fool anyone – I let Johan win to keep his confidence up for Nationals. It's all part of my long-term plan. I don't want to piss him off. As far as getting back together with O'Connor – it's OVER! I think he needs to go to counseling.”

The quarter-finals in the upper half of the draw put Bostrom / Bredberg v. Ferrin / Bonfigli and featured solid play by all players. Bredberg was heard crediting the victory to steadier play on the part of Bostrom. The quarter-final match between Innis / Irdoja v. Mavrin / Misitrano was expected to be a battle and the fans were not disappointed. A solid win for the 15th ranked team of Mavrin / Misitrano put them in the semi-finals against Bostrom / Bredberg – the 10th ranked team. While not making excuses, the fans were wondering if the lack of practice time due to travel to and from Estonia over the

holiday season had any impact on Irdoja's play. To his credit, Irdoja rejected such speculation and stated “I don’t think that travel had anything to do with it, they were just the better team today.” The semi-final featured a mix of timely power and finesse from all players. This was a true grinding battle to the end with Misitrano and Mavrin pulling it out in two close sets. Bostrom/ Bredberg decided to take out their loss on other tournament players in a high-stakes game of poker in the paddle hut. Bostrom stated “I may have lost in the semi-finals and don’t get a prize but I earned my entry fee back and still got a favor, lunch, and beer.”

The finals between Du Randt / Morneau and Mavrin / Misitrano was played before 50-75 fans from the area who were enticed to come watch with free beer and food and they braved the cold weather to support the players and the event. They got to see an excellent and dramatic final. Morneau / Du Randt took the first set 6-4 in workmanlike fashion. In the second set, Mavrin / Misitrano picked up their level of play with Misitrano was flying all over the court and volleying like National champion. They clearly dominated play and won the second set 6-2, which set up a third set for the title. The third set started out like the second set ended with outstanding all around play by Mavrin / Misitrano, especially at the net and Du Randt and Morneau making an unprecedented number of forced and unforced errors. Mavrin / Misitrano jumped out to a lead and kept that lead all the way until match point. Serving for the match at 5-3, they had match points but were not able to put it away. Du Randt / Morneau held on and were eventually able to hold off Mavrin / Misitrano and pull out a 7-5 third set victory. In the end, Morneau credited the victory to Du Randt’s choice of partner. Morneau stated “I think choosing to play with the tournament director was one of the best decisions Du Randt has made in years.”

All in all, it was a great event with great players, matches, food, prizes, and fans – exactly what paddle tournaments are all about.